The Daily Altar

An Aid to
Private Devotion
& Family Worship

THE DAILY ALTAR

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DAILY ALTAR

An aid to

PRIVATE DEVOTION
& FAMILY WORSHIP

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DEDICATED

TO THOSE WHO
KEEP THE FIRE

Foreword

One of the most vital needs of modern religion is the daily practice of the presence of God. To miss the joy and inspiration of regular and habitual periods of devotion is a distinct limitation of religious interest and efficiency, if not utterly fatal to the spiritual life.

Especially in this great moment of the world's history it is of basic importance that the deep sources of religious insight and power should be quickened and nourished. The tragedies of war have sent the suffering and bereaved of all the nations back to the springs of their comfort in God. The revolution that is taking place in every department of the world's life, in industry, in commerce, in education, in national and international relations, and in ethics and religion, makes it evident that the foundations of our faith must be laid deeper than ever before, and that our convictions regarding the immeasurably significant things of the spirit must be more than ever assured and confident. This result can be attained not by any impersonal development of the institutions of religion, but by the enrichment and growth of religion in the personal life of men and women.

The acquirement by the individual Christian and the family circle of the habit of methodical devotion is a means of serenity and power. Yet one of the regrettable features of our modern life is the neglect of private prayer and the family altar. Like that altar which Elijah found at Carmel, it is broken down and abandoned. In the homes of many Christians who were reared in an atmosphere of domestic piety, little heed is taken to the culture of mind and heart in the great essentials of Bible study and prayer. Many such Christians are conscious of a very real deficit in their own religious life, as a result of this neglect.

It is doubtless true that for the mood of our time the lengthy and more formal exercises of household devotion of former days cannot be revivied. Nor need this fact be deplored. But if we fail to find some other way of training our hearts in the fine art of quiet thoughtfulness and prayer, the lack in our personal character will surely register itself harmfully in the wider activities of church and society to which the new age is calling us.

The value of some manual of help to devotion, adjusted to the requirements of individuals and of family groups, needs no argument. If

the days are short and crowded, there is the more need for spiritual dire
tion and strength. If there are many voices calling to practical tasks an
recurring responsibilities, all the more is there demand for a few momen
of quiet reflection, in which the voice of God may be heard, and the so
awakened and girded for its daily career.

With the purpose of meeting in an entirely simple and practical ma
ner some of the needs of individuals and households in the attainment
the sense of spiritual reality, this book has been prepared. Its preparatio
has been a means of grace, a labor of love. It contains brief selections f
each day. It is adjusted to use in any year. In addition to the regular sele
tions, there will be found outstanding days in the caledar, which may b
used at the appropriate times. A few simple forms of grace at table a
added, and the necessary indices are provided.

In the hope that the material of this volume may prove a blessing
those who use it, even as its preparation and use in a more limited grou
have already proved, it is sent forth.

HENRY L. WILLETT
CHARLES CLAYTON MORRISON

The Daily Altar

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Lord, what a change within us one short hour
Spent in Thy presence will avail to make!
What heavy burdens from our bosoms take,
What parched grounds refresh, as with a shower!
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;
We rise, and all the distant and the near
Stand forth in the sunny outline, brave and clear!
We kneel, how weak! We rise, how full of power!
Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong,
Or others, that we are not always strong;
That we are ever overborne with care;
That we should ever weak or heartless be,
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,
And joy and strength and courage are with thee?

—*Archbishop Trench*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Unchanging God.*

Through all the changing years of our lives and through mankind's long history on the earth the one constant thing is the fatherly will of God. Nature and history are marked by change and decay. Our human purposes are inconstant, and our progress has been marked by many falls and wanderings. But God's purpose, the Father's will, has never failed. Unregardful of His presence though we be, still He leads us on and will lead until He brings us home.

✚

Scripture—Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.—*Psalm 90:1.*

✚

Thou, thou alone
Art everlasting, and the blessed spirits,
Which thou includest, as the sea her waves,
For adoration thou endurest; endure
For consciousness the motion of thy will.

—WILLIAM WORDSWORTH
("The Excursion.")

✚

Prayer—O God, Thou hast been in all past ages the help and stay of mankind. Be Thou to us in our day and time the light and guide of our lives. We look back into the year that is gone and see the workings of Thy goodness. How much more clear does Thy providence appear now that the year is done than when we were in the midst of its stresses and its uncertainties! Help us in the year that awaits us to practice Thy presence, to discern Thy good guidance of our lives, and to trust Thee even when we do not see the outcome. And may we have this day a sense of Thy protecting love which shall give us quietness of spirit, and a holy joy in the services of Thy house.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*The Spirit of Quietness.*

Our lives are weakened by care and inner disquiet. We lose in efficiency and miss our aim by a certain nervousness of spirit that reflects the rush and confusion of the world's life around us. With our Master, busier and more burdened than we, it was not so. Amid the clamor of many duties and most grave uncertainties he moved serene and peaceful. It was through this inner poise of soul that he overcame the world.

✚

Scripture—In nothing be anxious, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.—*Phil. 4:6.*

✚

The will to neither strive nor cry,
The power to feel with others give!
Calm, calm me more! nor let me die
Before I have begun to live.

—MATTHEW ARNOLD
("Lines written in Kensington Gardens.")

✚

Prayer—Almighty and most merciful Father, help us to spend our lives in quietness and serene trust in Thee. Save us from fretfulness and worry, and restrain us from impatience. Make this day a season of new conquests and of fresh thanksgivings. We cannot see Thee, but we can see Jesus Christ, Thy Son, and receive his words, enjoy his friendship, walk by his counsel and trust ourselves to the mystery of his cross. Abiding in him, may we have the assurance of Thy love.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*Blessing Through Trouble.*

Great souls are wrought out through grief and difficulty. Not many among us come to the estate of character save by the way that leads through sorrow. When we suffer untoward experiences we are not to think of them as sent upon us by God in wrath. But we are to think of Him as encompassing with His gracious purpose all our troubles and disappointments, as well as our achievements and joys. If our lives are committed to His keeping He makes all things work together for our good.

✚

Scripture—Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.—*Psalm 42:11.*

✚

Life, I repeat, is the energy of Love,
Divine or human; exercised in pain,
In strife, or tribulation, and ordained,
If so approved and satisfied, to pass
Through shades and silent rest, to endless joy.

—ROBERT BROWNING
("A Death in the Desert.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we rejoice in the assurance of Thy presence and love in all our times of disappointment. It is not Thy will that we should fail of any good. Thou dost not grieve or afflict the children of men. Our sins, our mistakes and the evil of the world bring us to many dry and barren places, pools in which there is no water. We take our way, thinking it good, and sometimes it leads us to the desert. Help us to lay our hand in Thine, and go where Thou wilt guide us. We do not ask that life may be always a pleasant road. Rather we would pray for courage to face disappointment and bear hardship. With the high courage of Christ, may we go on our way.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*With Uplifted Face.*

There is no stay for our souls in the midst of life's cares and tasks like the vision of things spiritual and eternal. This vision tends easily to become confused and blurred. It can be kept clear and fair only by constant effort. Faith in the unseen world of abiding values requires cultivation through prayer and meditation, and through close personal companionship with Christ.

✚

Scripture—For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.—*2 Cor. 4:17, 18.*

✚

And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.

—WILLIAM WORDSWORTH
("Tintern Abbey.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, who art in heaven, we thank Thee for the revelation Thou dost give us in Thy Word of the joys of eternal life for Thy children. We pray that we may so escape from the turmoil of our lives and mount above the gloom of our ways that heavenly things may engage our thoughts and purposes. Wilt Thou give us to know the reality of the things not seen, and to experience the desire for things eternal, through Christ our Savior. —*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*Our Need of God.*

We are evermore asking God for many gifts, and these He loves to bestow. But do our prayers fully recognize that the greatest and most satisfying gift is the Giver Himself? It is His mystic companionship that our hearts crave, even though we may not be so conscious of this longing as of our desires for other things. But though we should possess a multitude of God's gifts and not know the intimacy of His fatherly presence, we should be poor indeed.

✚

Scripture—As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.—*Psalm 42:1.*

✚

"Yes, write it in the rock," Saint Bernard said,
"Grave it on brass with adamantine pen!
'Tis God Himself becomes apparent, when
God's wisdom and God's goodness are display'd."

—HENRY W. LONGFELLOW

✚

Prayer—Father of mercies, bestow upon us, we pray Thee, the blessing of Thy favor and love which enrich the soul as with the river of God. Our hearts cry out for Thee in a thirsty land where no water is. Thou hast made us for Thyself and we are evermore unsatisfied without Thee. Beyond all Thou canst bestow of earthly blessings is the gracious gift of Thyself which we crave. Visit us with Thy salvation, Thy abiding presence, Thy Holy Spirit. May we behold Thee in the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*Putting Away Anger and Enmity.*

At the beginning of the day we do well prayerfully to fortify our hearts against those passions of anger and enmity that possess our soul so easily unless we take up arms against them. And at the end of the day we do well to cleanse and purify our thoughts of any harshness or futile passion that may have found entrance amidst the confusions and distractions of our work and play. For enmity and anger against our fellows is also enmity against God. The Father cannot abide with us except we let Him cast out these harsh indispositions.

✚

Scripture—Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice.—*Eph. 4:31.*

But now do ye also put them all away: anger, wrath, malice.—*Col. 3:8.*

✚

> But, ever after, the small violence done
> Rankled in him, and ruffled all his heart,
> As the sharp wind that ruffles all day long
> On the bare coast.
>
> —ALFRED TENNYSON ("Guinevere.")

✚

Prayer—O Lord, enable us to rise above all sins of temper and habit. Drive out from our hearts the secret suspicion, the lurking grudge, and the wish to speak evil of any man. Teach us the importance of keeping our own souls clear of bitterness and all anger, lest we be weakened thereby in our inner life and embarrassed in our communion with Thee. Unite us with our fellows in the love of honor, truth and Thee, and may our hearts be cleansed by faith in the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*The Secret of Prayer.*

Three aspects of prayer are worthy of our meditation: that prayer is real converse with God, in which the Father Himself both hears our communications and responds in gracious communications of His own; that prayer is a personal privilege in which our hearts should learn to find delight; that faithfully to practice the spiritual art of prayer is to find the secret of power.

✚

Scripture—But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most Holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God.—*Jude 20, 21.*

✚

> Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
> Than this world dreams of. Wherefore let thy voice
> Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
> For what are men better than sheep or goats
> That nourish a blind life within the brain,
> If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
> Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
> For so the whole round world is every way
> Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.
>
> —ALFRED TENNYSON ("The Passing of Arthur.")

✚

Prayer—Lord, teach us how to pray. Our faltering speech but faintly utters the yearnings of our hearts. Thou art the inspirer and hearer of prayer. Help us to be Thy loving and prayerful children. Give us to know the joy of fellowship with Thee, and may the Master's example of prayerfulness give us confidence to ask that we may receive. Abiding thus in communion with Thee and in loving fellowship with Christ and all our brothers, may we await with confidence the day when hope shall change to glad fruition and prayer to communion face to face.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Holy Day.*

The one day in seven is taking on even greater significance in modern life than it possessed in earlier times. To the venerable sanctions with which religion has always hallowed it there are now being added the sanctions of secular life as represented in industry and science and social life. The Lord's Day is one of God's most gracious gifts to man-kind. It should be treasured with love, and safeguarded, not by laws and traditions alone, but by the respectful and grateful example of those who discern its value and who, through its ministry, have learned to enter more fully into the presence of God.

✣

Scripture—The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.—*Hab. 2:20.*

✣

Lord, in this sacred hour within Thy courts we bend,
And bless Thy love and own Thy power, our Father & our Friend.
But Thou art not alone in courts by mortals trod,
Nor only is the day thine own when man draws near to God;
Thy temple is the arch of the unmeasured sky,
Thy Sabbaths the stupendous march of grand eternity.

✣

Prayer—Our Father, we hail this day as the best of all the week. Its memories are dear to us, and it brings us the joy of fellowship with Thy people. Help us to enter the house of God with gratitude, and to find it truly the place of prayer, the gate of heaven. And while the ministries and fellowship of Thy house satisfy and inspire us, help us to understand that all places are sacred in the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*Resistance to Temptation.*

Let us not be among those who resent temptation. Let us rather stand with our Lord who willingly met the tempter and resisted him. If we resent temptation we lose the glory and strength of character that can come only through such testing. "Count it all joy," says the apostle, "when ye fall into divers temptations." He means that by resisting them we grow in grace and in character as we could not grow were our lives set in protected places where temptations could not come. Our temptation is our *chance*—our chance to win manhood, womanhood, character, and real comradeship with Christ.

✚

Scripture—Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.—*James 1:12.*

✚

In the hour of my distress,
When temptations me oppress,
And when I my sins confess,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me!

—ROBERT HERRICK ("The Litany.")

✚

Prayer—Father of our spirits, Thou Comforter and Friend, preserve us this day from falling a prey to any temptation that would rob us of purity, calmness and joy. As our Lord foiled the tempter by recalling Thy strong word which had been written, so help us, we pray Thee, to find the strength that comes through a knowledge of the Holy Scripture. Make us conscious also of Thy personal presence and power through which we may possess the will to resist all unworthy appeals. Save us from sin, for Thy name's sake.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*Preparedness and Watchfulness.*

Character is always in peril. In this world, at least, our soul never reaches a point where its goodness and strength are secure against the possibility of failure. Even one whose character rests upon a life-time of Christian habits must continually be on guard against the stratagems of evil. Not only in self-defense against insidious temptations must we be constantly prepared, but in our readiness to meet and take advantage of our opportunities for service and growth. Christian character does not grow automatically; it is the product of mental awareness and a ready will. Our Lord is ever coming to us and knocking at our door. Happy are we if our eyes are open to perceive him and our hearts ready to let Him in.

✚

Scripture—Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning; and be ye yourselves like unto men looking for their lord, when he shall return from the marriage feast; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may straightway open unto him. Blessed are those servants whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching.—*Luke 12:35-37.*

✚

> And the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost
> Is, the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin.
>
> —ROBERT BROWNING
> ("The Statue and the Bust.")

✚

Prayer—Holy Father, we thank Thee for the warnings and admonitions of Thy holy Word. We are in constant danger of missing the best things in life through inattention and neglect. We need such arousal as shall save us from the loss of opportunity, of time and of character; for to lose these is to lose life itself. May we keep our souls in readiness for Thee, and we cannot then be unprepared for any event.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*Nature and God.*

All great souls have loved nature and seen in her an interpretation of the power and goodness of God. To understand nature, to rightly stand in awe of her wonders, and to enter into her moods with appreciation is closely akin to religious worship. Yet it is important to keep in mind that it is by faith, not by sight, that we find God in nature, just as we find Him in our daily experiences not by the seeing of the eye but by the faith of the heart.

✚

Scripture—The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork; day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. —*Psalm 19:1.*

✚

Fast as the evening shades prevail,
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,
And nightly to the listening earth
Repeats the story of her birth.

—JOSEPH ADDISON
("The Hymn of Creation.")

✚

Prayer—Lord, Thy glory fills the heavens, and the earth is full of Thy praise. Thou art the Creator of all things, and Thy tender mercies are over all Thy works. Help us to join our worship to that of all Thy creatures, for we would not be thankless when all nature is praising Thee. And may our gratitude for Thy mercies bring us so near to Thee that we may grow like Thee in goodness and in love. We pray in Jesus' name.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*The Healing Power of God.*

What reserves of life and power there are in God that we have not yet drawn upon! The wideness of Jesus' ministry in teaching, preaching and healing reveals by contrast how narrowly we, his followers, practice the revelation of God which he made. Without adopting the theories of those who make physical healing central in their religion, it is our Christian privilege to draw upon God in our illness and sufferings, to give Him a chance through our prayers to coöperate with science and medical skill, and with all human aids, in the healing of our bodies.

✚

Scripture—But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed and go unto thy house. —*Mark 2:10, 11.*

✚

He took the suffering human race,
He read each wound, each weakness clear,
He struck his hand upon the place,
And said, Thou ailest here, and here.

—MATTHEW ARNOLD ("Memorial Verses.")

✚

Prayer—O Thou great Friend to all the sons of men, we claim Thy healing and helping power. In us there is no health, nor strength, nor wisdom; in Thee there is power for our uplifting and great gentleness to bear with our ill-desert. We trust ourselves to Thee, nor shall we ever trust in vain. Thou who forgivest all our iniquities, and healest all our diseases, forgive and heal us now, for our Savior's sake. —*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Final Purpose of God.*

When we consider the vast span of the ages and the mighty forces that work in nature and history, our own lives and our little day of life seem insignificant. But when we consider that through all the cosmic and historic process there runs the purpose of God to bring forth a perfected humanity in the likeness of Christ, then our lives, however humble, take on eternal values. For we share in God's final purpose insofar as we trust ourselves to Christ and strive to become like him.

✚

Scripture—Making known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in him, unto a dispensation of the fullness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth.—*Eph. 1:9, 10.*

✚

> That God, which ever lives and loves,
> One God, one law, one element,
> And one far-off, divine event,
> To which the whole creation moves.
>
> —ALFRED TENNYSON ("In Memoriam.")

✚

Prayer—Good Father, Thy purposes are eternal, and can find their full consummation only in the complete success of the redemptive work of Christ. Of that saving grace, manifested to all men, we are both the objects and the instruments. We praise Thee for this high honor, and we crave Thy blessing in the effort to conform our lives to so vast a program. Help us to know the part we have to bear in this world-wide divine adventure, that thus we may enter into Thy eternal plan.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*Moderation and Contentment.*

Life ensnares us with the sorry illusion that it is in abundance of goods and in unleashed desires that we may hope to find contentment. It is a great day for the soul when it casts off this deception and learns that contentment and peace dwell with self-control and moderation, and that the goods most to be prized are the riches of the inner life of the spirit, rather than any temporal possessions. Passionate indulgence leaves the soul wearied, dull and dissatisfied, while moderation and restraint have their reward in a buoyant spirit and an unwearied zest for life.

✚

Scripture—Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food suitable for me.—*Prov. 30:8.*

✚

This man is freed from servile bands
Of hope to rise or fear to fall;
Lord of himself, though not of lands,
And, having nothing, yet hath all.

—SIR HENRY WOTTON
("The Character of a Happy Life.")

✚

Prayer—Father of mercies, Thou God of love, we praise Thee for the providence which ministers to all our needs. The gifts of life are of Thy bestowing. Make us thankful for them all. We do not ask great things for ourselves; we ask rather for the contented spirit that accepts with gratitude the favors of Thy hand, and knows from whence they come. Give us, we beseech Thee, the true riches of humility, courtesy, helpfulness and faith in Thee. Make us like our Master, in whose name we pray.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Worship of God.*

The way to God's presence seems particularly open and inviting on the Lord's day. Our habits, the customs of the community, our release from daily work, all unite with the sanctions of God's Word and the promptings of our hearts to set our feet in the pathway that leads to the house of God. If we can learn better how to live as in the sight of the Eternal, to find deeper joy in the worship and fellowship of the church and to make each act of life a response to the call of Christ, we shall truly have communed with God and hallowed the day.

✚

Scripture—God is spirit, and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth.—*John 4:24.*

✚

Love, we are in God's hand.
How strong now looks the life he makes us lead;
So free we seem, so fettered fast we are!
I feel he laid the fetter; let it lie!

—ROBERT BROWNING
("Andrea Del Sarto.")

✚

Prayer—Almighty God, who canst give the light that in darkness shall make us glad, the life that in gloom shall give us joy, the peace that amidst discord shall bring us quietness, let us live this week in that light, that life and that peace, so that we may gain the victory over those things that press us down, over temptation and over all indifference. May our private worship grow more sweet and rewarding, and our presence in the house of God more desirable and satisfying, as we rise from duty to privilege and from faith to the vision of Thyself.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*Our Friendships.*

How poor and formal would life be to us without our intimate friends. Even our Lord responded to the common human yearnings for friendship. The little circle of twelve disciples included yet a smaller circle of three — Peter, James and John — who shared, apparently, a particular intimacy with the Master. And even within this inner circle there was one whom the Gospel writer makes conspicuous by describing him as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Our friendships, if they rest upon spiritual affinities and common moral ideals, are a constant inspiration and protection and joy.

✚

Scripture—My companion and my familiar friend, we took sweet counsel together.—*Psalm 55:13, 14.*

✚

> For we were nursed upon the self-same hill,
> Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and rill;
> Together both, ere the high lawns appear'd
> Under the opening eyelids of the morn,
> Oft till the star, that rose at evening bright,
> Toward heaven's descent had slop'd his westering wheel.
>
> —JOHN MILTON ("Lycidas.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we are grateful for the friends Thou hast given us, and for all they add to our happiness. Assist us in the cultivation of such a spirit as shall make friendship with us a desirable possession. And help us to know that true religion is nothing other than friendship with God and with our fellow men.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*Christ in Us.*

One of the sharpest contrasts between the Christian religion and other religions is furnished by the testimony of Christian experience to the indwelling presence of Christ. No other faith offers anything comparable to it. Christ in us is the secret of Christianity's power in our lives and in the world. Through his intimate possession of our hearts and wills our character is transformed, our old self dies, and a new self with new loyalties, new enthusiasms, new strength and a great new hope, arises in its place. Our faith in Jesus is partial so long as we think of him merely as a figure of the historic past. He is still and evermore in the world, and his dwelling place is the heart of every one who earnestly strives to be like him.

✚

Scripture—I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me. —*Gal. 2:20.*

✚

By all of Him I have in Thee,
Leave nothing of myself in me,
Let me so read Thy life, that I
Unto all life of mine may die.

—RICHARD CRASHAW ("The Flaming Heart.")

✚

Prayer—Loving Father, life is very sweet to us, but we learn daily to see more of its true meanings as we come to know more fully the mind of Christ. He has taught us all we know of Thee. Believing that his message of Thee is to be implicitly trusted, we draw near to him in faith and love, and know that in likeness to him we cannot be far from Thee. Satisfy our souls, we pray Thee, with the realization of this Friend within us.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*Love, the Secret of God's Life.*

Our life, so far as it is spiritual, is just our response to the active prompting of which God himself is author and source. The initiative is always with Him, not with us. In our faith, our prayer, our kindly deed, the forgiveness of our sins, our love, God is always long beforehand with our soul. Before we seek Him He is out in the open way in search of us, and when we think we are discovering some new truth we are in reality apprehending His revelation. It should reassure and chasten our hearts to know that our lives are undergirded with the everlasting arms, and that the God with whom we have to do is evermore drawing us by love unto Himself.

✚

Scripture—I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee. —*Jer. 31:3.*

✚

Thou art too hard for me in Love;
There is no dealing with Thee in that Art.
That is Thy Masterpiece, I see.
When I contrive and plot to prove
Something that may be conquest on my part,
Thou still, O Lord, outstrippest me.

—GEORGE HERBERT ("Love.")

✚

Prayer—Gracious Father, we have come to know something of the meaning of love, because we know Thine own love, manifested in Jesus. We love, because Thou hast first loved us. Teach us all its divine mystery, its sacrifice, its suffering and its joy, that we may thus learn Thy secret, and become more like Thee.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*The House Eternal.*

In the midst of our most active duties, when life seems most full of joy and richest in satisfactions, it is always well to pause and reflect upon the life immortal. This we should do not to counteract our natural zest for this life, but rather to increase it, and to let the light of the Beyond flow in upon us here. To the Christian, the thought of the house not made with human hands, nor standing upon the unsteady foundations of human vicissitude, is a thought that inspires joy and hope and fills the heart with song.

✚

Scripture—For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For verily in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven.—*2 Cor. 5:1, 2.*

✚

As this my carnal robe grows old,
Soil'd, rent, and worn by length of years,
Let me on that by faith lay hold
Which man in life immortal wears.

—GEORGE WITHER
("The Prayer of Old Age.")

✚

Prayer—Father, our days are gliding swiftly by, and each one brings us nearer the bound of life. Yet Thou art showing us that the life that is hidden with Christ in Thee has no bounds of time or place, but goes onward into larger and fairer spaces. In this assurance we rejoice. Help us to grow more confident in our hope of life eternal, and more certain that our best purposes cannot miss fulfillment. —*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Spirit of Fearlessness.*

As followers of Jesus it is our right and duty to live without fear. We should let our Lord free us forever from that dread which regards with apprehension the events of daily experience, and from that haunting sense of possible failure or harm which robs the soul of power. There is something inspiring in the way our Lord moved amid his circumstances — so unafraid, so steady in his step, so calm and sane. He knew there was nothing to fear, because the world was his Father's and he accepted each day's events as an unfolding of the Father's will for him.

✚

Scripture—Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful.—*John 14:1.*

✚

> And all is well, tho' faith and form
> Be sunder'd in the night of fear:
> Well roars the storm to those that hear
> A deeper voice across the storm.
>
> —ALFRED TENNYSON
> ("In Memoriam.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we trust in Thy providence and love. In Thy hands are the deep places of the earth, and the strength of the hills is Thine also. We thank Thee for the life of our Lord, and for his death. We are brought near to Thee by his cross, and have entrance into the holiest through his resurrection. Inspire us with his unfailing confidence and hope. Help us to overcome all fear in the spirit of love and faith which he evermore revealed. Believing in Thee with all our heart, may we in the strength of that faith achieve the victory that overcometh the world. —*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*The Higher Destiny.*

It is no childish notion, but the deepest wisdom, that for each soul God has a plan of life, with an end and goal toward which His providence guides our unfolding experience. To discern in some degree the broader outlines of that plan, and to make each day carry us further toward the realization of that goal, is to league one's life with unconquerable forces. But if we view our life too narrowly, thinking to find the supreme good in immediate circumstances or in present delights and comforts, we miss life's high end and aim, and thwart God's gracious purpose for us. To know that our life is fulfilling its divine destiny gives us power to dispense with many things and to reinterpret all untoward things in the light of ultimate triumph.

✚

Scripture—Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor for the body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat?—*Matt. 6:25.*

Ye therefore shall be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.—*Matt. 5:48.*

✚

Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way.
But to act that each tomorrow
Find us farther than today.

—HENRY W. LONGFELLOW
("A Psalm of Life.")

✚

Prayer—Divine Father, we want to learn the lesson of interest in the higher things. Aid us to understand, we beseech Thee, that neither pleasure nor pain are of value in themselves, but that all the experience of life should bring us further on the way toward holiness. May our endeavor be, therefore, the attainment of character, and neither the winning nor the avoidance of the joys of life. This we ask in the name of Christ, our great Example.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Holy Spirit.*

Inexpressible comfort and strength are in the thought that all our life is shot through with the activities of the divine Spirit. We are not alone in any sorrow or ambition or joy or defeat or success, or even in our sin — for the Spirit of the Father shares our every mood and need, comforting, helping, restraining and healing us.

✚

Scripture—When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth.—*John 16:13.*

And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he gave us.—*1 John 3:24.*

✚

Creator Spirit, by whose aid
The world's foundations first were laid,
Come, visit every pious mind;
Come, pour thy joys on humankind;
From sin and sorrow set us free,
And make thy temples worthy thee.

—JOHN DRYDEN
("Veni Creator Spiritus.")

✚

Prayer—Our Heavenly Father, upon this day Thou hast blessed, making it the most precious of the week, we draw near to Thee in worship. Thou hast spoken to us in nature, in the holy Word, with its record of the life of our Lord, and in the witness of Thy Holy Spirit with our spirits that we are Thy children. Assist us, we beseech Thee, so to learn the will of God that we may find the way of righteousness and peace, being led by the Spirit into all the truth.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*The True Sacrifice.*

Since Jesus has revealed God to us as a spiritual God whose throne is in our hearts, and who must be worshipped in spirit and truth, the idea of sacrificing animals to Him has been outgrown. We cannot appease the wrath of our God nor win His favor by any such external sacrifices as they bring to their God who do not know the God and Father of Jesus. But the instinct of sacrifice is present with us all. The moral disparity between our soul and the holy God is such as to stir within us the desire to make some gift to Him through which He may bless us. Nothing less than the consecration to His service of our own body, soul and spirit meets the requirement of an ethical religion such as our Christianity is.

✚

Scripture—Hath Jehovah as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of Jehovah? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.—*1 Sam. 15:22.*

✚

The tumult and the shouting dies—
The captains and the kings depart.
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,
An humble and a contrite heart,
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget — lest we forget.

—RUDYARD KIPLING
("The Recessional.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we know that Thou carest not for sacrifices of blood. The sacrifices of God are a broken heart; a humble and obedient spirit, O God, Thou wilt not despise. Accept, we beseech Thee, our gratitude for Thy daily mercies, and for the blessings which enrich our lives. Help us to devote ourselves as living sacrifices to Thee, which is our reasonable service. We pray in Christ's name. —*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*The Grace of Humility.*

In our aggressive age when a high premium is set upon the power of personality, to commend meekness and humility seems almost insincere. Yet when we study our Lord's character we see the close relation of real humility to real power. Greatly as he was endowed, far-reaching and vast as was the purpose of his life, he nevertheless kept alive in his soul the sense of his brotherly kinship to all men and his personal subjection to the will of God. He thus knew that greatness and power would be attained not by proudly seeking to be ministered to, but by unselfishly giving his life in helpful service.

✣

Scripture—I seek not my own glory.—*John 8:50.*

I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day.—*John 9:4.*

✣

Shall I seek glory, then, as vain men seek,
Oft not deserved? I seek not mine, but his
Who sent me; and therefore thereby witness whence I am.

—JOHN MILTON
("Paradise Regained.")

✣

Prayer—Holy Father, we are humbled and astonished by the meekness and gentleness of Christ. He took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. He found his joy in the will of God, and gloried in his lowly estate. May we so follow him that we shall seek not our own will, but His who sent us into the world. Thus may we learn the joy and success of the life that counts not self dear, but consecrates all to Thy holy service.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*The Thunders and the Silence.*

God reveals himself in many ways. He is not shut up to one mode of self-disclosure. We may hope to hear His voice in the sudden and spectacular events of our lives, and we may with equal assurance expect Him to speak to us in the silences. He comes to us in the unusual, the shocking, the clash and crash of circumstance. He also makes His presence known in gentler ways, by the inner prompting of conscience, or the steady glow of our ideals, or by our remembered vision of the face of Christ.

✚

Scripture—There were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud; and all the people that were in the camp trembled.—*Ex. 19:16.*

And after the fire, a still small voice.—*1 Kings 19:12.*

✚

Witness the thunder that Mount Sinai heard,
When all the hill with fiery clouds did flame,
And wandering Israel, with the sight afear'd,
Blinded with terror, durst not touch the same.

—GILES FLETCHER
("Christ's Victory in Heaven.")

✚

Prayer—Dear Father, sometimes Thou dost speak to us in the thunders as at Sinai, and again it is in the still, small voice of love that we hear Thee. Thou hast revealed Thyself to us in Christ Jesus our Lord. Turn our hearts to understand what Thou sayest to us in the secret place where we meet Thee in prayer. Inspire us with a sense of Thy presence and with the joy of Thy service. Make us sharers in Thy message to the world, and in the triumph of Thy truth.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*The Children's Hour.*

All our endeavors after wisdom yield at last this result, as comforting as it is disillusionizing: that life offers its best truth not to the sophisticated mind, but to the childlike heart. Men may be very learned in the knowledge of science and very benighted in the wisdom of the spirit. If natural impulse did not lead us to commune often with childhood, the dictates of wisdom would direct us to have much comradeship with God's little ones, that we might learn from them the secret of entrance into the spiritual kingdom.

✚

Scripture—Come, ye children, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.—*Psalm 34:11.*

Train up a child in the way he should go, and even when he is old he will not depart from it.—*Prov. 22:6.*

✚

Between the dark and the daylight,
When the night is beginning to lower,
Comes a pause in the day's occupation,
That is known as the Children's Hour.

—HENRY W. LONGFELLOW
("The Children's Hour.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. As little children we would come to Thee, for Thou carest for us even as a father for his little ones. We thank Thee for the children in our homes. Thy gifts they are to us, and every day we bring them to Thee in our prayers, that we may know how to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. We want them to know how good a thing life is when it is lived in the fear of God, and the love of the things He approves. May the hours which all the household spends in common work, or study, or pleasure, be the best of the day, and may the evening time bring us the sheltering sense of membership in the unbroken Family of God. In Jesus' name.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Power of Hope.*

Hope is creative. It brings to pass things that are not. Life's best realities begin by being hoped for. Afterward they take on form and substance and fact. This is especially true on the higher ranges of living — intellectual, moral, spiritual. Here it is possible to do almost what we will with our lives. To aspire to be more intelligent and more noble, is in some measure to have actually attained. Let not our soul shrink from its most daring hopes — for strength, for wisdom, for character, for immortality. We shall find when we come to possess them that their reality depended all along upon our hope that they might be true.

✚

Scripture—For in hope are we saved; but hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopeth for that which he seeth? But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.—*Rom. 8:24, 25.*

✚

The thing we long for, that we are
For one transcendent moment,
Before the Present poor and bare
Can make its sneering comment.

—JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL
("Longings.")

✚

Prayer—Our gracious God, teach us what powers for self-enrichment lie within our reach every day. Make us to comprehend in some true measure how possible it is for us to become what we will by Thy help, and that what we long to be in strength, holiness and fulness of life we already begin to be in the earnest desire of the heart. If then we may be like Thyself even for one moment, may we not repeat that blessed experience, until it shall begin to be habitual? Take our hand, we beseech Thee, and lead us in straight ways to the habitation of Thy holiness. And in the life to come grant us the eternal blessedness of Thy presence. For Christ's sake.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*Knowledge Through Experience.*

How little do we know by reasoning as compared with what we learn in experience! There are depths of assurance and conviction in our hearts that reason has not yet fathomed, and may never fathom. Without robbing the intellect of any of its dignity, we must keep clear in all our thinking the fact that Reality is more than our philosophy of it, that life overflows all our tiny thought-vessels, and therefore, that the power of Christ may heal and save and comfort our soul even when we are unable to give a rational explanation of its working.

✚

Scripture—[The man whom Jesus had healed] answered, Whether he be a sinner, I know not. One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.—*John 9:25.*

✚

If e'er, when faith had fall'n asleep,
I heard a voice, "Believe no more,"
And heard an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled in the godless deep;

A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And like a man in wrath the heart
Stood up and answer'd, "I have felt."

—ALFRED TENNYSON
("In Memoriam.")

✚

Prayer—Good Father, Thou hast in many ways confirmed our faith in Jesus; but in none more surely than through the witness of our own hearts and lives to his saving power. Beyond and above all the evidence of Thy Word is the testimony of Thy saving grace in our lives. We were blind, but now we see. We were lost, but Thou hast brought us home. And thus Thou hast manifested Thyself to us as wonderful past all our comprehension. Therefore we love Thee, and we would humbly serve Thee now and evermore.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Will to Serve.*

Christ's law of unselfish service will always be a heavy yoke so long as it rests *upon* our will and not *within* our will. But when our soul has organized itself so as to include others as an essential part of itself, so as to root unselfish service in the very will to live, then the will to serve is no longer a burdening yoke but an inherent joy. This, perhaps, is one meaning of conversion—a thorough and radical rearrangement of personal feelings whereby one's self is enlarged to include other selves as an essential part of it.

✚

Scripture—Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.—*Gal. 6:2.*

In all things I gave you an example, that so laboring ye ought to help the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.— *Acts 20:35.*

✚

Be thou guardian of the weak,
Of the unfriended, thou the friend;
No guerdon for thy valor seek,
No end beyond the avowed end.
Wouldst thou thy godlike power preserve,
Be godlike in the will to serve.

—JEANNETTE B. GILDER
("The Parting of the Ways.")

✚

Prayer—Father of life and light, we adore Thee for the gift of the new week and of the new and holy day. Our hearts take fresh courage at the thought of all that this day means in the history of the world. We accept it as one of Thy great gifts to us, and we would use it as a means of strength to enable us to serve Thee by serving our fellow men. May this be the burden of our thought as we enter Thy house today. And may the worship in which we join bring us more of the spirit of our Lord Jesus.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*Our Departed Loved Ones.*

If we were to permit ourselves to regard death narrowly, as a solitary and appalling fact, we should feel hopelessly separated from those whom we love who have taken the hand of death and left us alone. But viewed in the broader sense, this experience is an onward step in the ceaseless progress of the soul toward completion. Our beloved are not far from us, and are busy at some of the worthful tasks of our Father's universe. In that wider companionship they are ever with us.

✚

Scripture—And the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein, and his servants shall do him service; and they shall see his face; and his name shall be on their foreheads.—*Rev. 22:3, 4.*

✚

They are all gone into the world of light!
And I alone sit lingering here;
Their very memory is fair and bright,
And my sad thoughts doth clear.

—HENRY VAUGHAN
("Beyond the Veil.")

✚

Prayer—God of our fathers, we bless Thee for the mercy that endureth forever. The life we live is but a transient thing, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. If death were the end, how sad would be our losses, how hopeless our defeat. But we have a sure and blessed hope, and know that those who have left our side have entered another chamber in the Father's house, where we shall meet them in the days to come. Comfort our hearts with this good hope, and may the way grow brighter as we come nearer home.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*The Tides of Life.*

All around this world of ours the living things of earth and air and sea carry on their never-ending work and play. Not less within ourselves the tides of life move on, in our bodies, our minds, our souls. To make these inner industries worthful and rewarding is our purpose. To save ourselves from stagnation, and to achieve the noblest ends of action is our desire.

✚

Scripture—With thee is the fountain of life. — *Psalm 36:9.*

And God said; Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.—*Gen. 1:20.*

The spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty giveth me life.—*Job 33:4.*

✚

Being's tide
Swells hitherward, and myriads of forms
Live, robed with beauty, painted by the sun,
Their dust, pervaded by the nerves of God,
Throbs with an over-mastering energy
Knowing and doing.

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON
("Pan.")

✚

Prayer—Father of life, Thy hand is seen in all the wondrous domain of creation. Wherever we look, we are witnesses of the mystery and the might of Thy work in the ages past and at this hour. In our own bodies and souls the tides of life flow onward with unceasing current. We know that all this thrill of life is from Thee. Save us from the foolish mistake of forgetting Thee in the multitude of activities which Thy mercy grants us. We crave all there is of life, and we ask that Thou wilt not let our souls be satisfied with less than the best. In Christ's name.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*Perfection and the Soul's Progress.*

What wonders of God's being and activity smite our eyes when, unobstructed by doubts or selfishness or human pride, we open them to behold the vast creation in the midst of which we live! And how our heart thrills at the thought that man is the climax of God's work and wisdom and grace! Up along the ascending pathway of His creative purpose lies the present road of our achieving. To walk therein in the Father's companionship is life's supreme dignity.

✚

Scripture—His work is perfect, for all his ways are justice.—*Deut. 32:4.*

Ye therefore shall be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.—*Matt. 5:48.*

✚

Do I task any faculty highest, to image success?
I but open my eyes, — and perfection, no more and no less,
In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is seen God
In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and the clod.

And thus within and around me I ever renew
(With that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises it too)
The submission of man's nothing-perfect to God's all-complete,
As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to his feet.

—ROBERT BROWNING
("Saul.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we are amazed at the glory disclosed to us in Thy work in the universe and in the lives of Thy servants, the saints of the past. How shall we satisfy our yearning to know Thee in fuller measure? How shall we come to that perfection of knowledge which our Lord ever enjoyed in his companionship with Thee? Our hearts would be borne down with despair at the heights of divine perfection before us, had we not the word of our Master assuring us that in Thine own good time we are to be fashioned like unto himself. Give us courage to make some progress every day. In Jesus' name.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*Reality Through Imagination.*

There is given to us the power of seeing with an inward eye, and thus of apprehending the invisible. By intuition, by a kind of instinct, our soul has a way of divining truth and reality without much apparent help from formal reason. This power lies within our imagination, which is the power wherein lodges also the genius of all creative poets, artists, prophets and makers of song. It is through our imagination that God is continually creating for us a new world — new heavens and a new earth.

✚

Scripture—We were like them that dream. —*Psalm 126:1.*

Our bower is green, the beams of our house are cedars, and our rafters are firs....and at our doors are all manner of fruits.—*Song of Songs 1:17, 7:13.*

I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision. —*Acts 26:19.*

✚

A house not built by mortals,
In the summer days is mine;
Wide open stand its portals
All sweet with flower and vine.
Many a leafy pennant
Above my slumber streams;
I am God's happy tenant
In this dear house of dreams.

—FRANK DEMPSTER SHERMAN
("The House of Dreams.")

✚

Prayer—Dear Father, we praise Thee for the gifts of mind with which Thou hast endowed us. We are able to rise out of the half-realities of the sense world to a world of ideal beauty, where all of our dreams come true. Teach us, we pray Thee, how to use this great gift of imagination so that it shall not be a curse but a blessing. Grant us visions that shall lift us from worldliness and sin into the light of Thine own holy presence. Then all our house shall be beautiful.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*Eternal God and Tender Father.*

We cannot hold God's majesty in too great awe, but it is possible for us so to conceive His greatness that we do not allow our soul the intimacy with Him which He craves and which we need. The one great fact Jesus came to reveal was that the infinite and eternal God is the All-loving too. He is tender Father as well as mighty Ruler. To keep our intimacy free from irreverence, and our awe free from cold formality, is to find the open way to true and satisfying communion with God.

✚

Scripture—Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.—*Psalm 90:1.*

Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.—*Psalm103:13.*

✚

Thou who didst wrap the cloud
Of infancy around us, that Thyself
Therein with our simplicity, awhile
Mightst hold, on earth, communion undisturbed;
Who from the anarchy of dreaming sleep,
Or from the death-like void, with punctual care,
And touch as gentle as the morning light,
Restor'st us daily to the powers of sense
And reason's steadfast rule, Thou, Thou alone
Art everlasting.

—WILLIAM WORDSWORTH
("The Prelude.")

✚

Prayer—Father of spirits, Thou God of life and of salvation, we awake to this day with the consciousness that it is through Thy kindness that we still have health and reason. We thank Thee for our families, for the children in our homes, and for all the happy events the days bring us in their passing. Our life is such a little thing. Help us to acquire something of the sense of Thine own eternity, that we may feel that we too share a little in that endlessness which belongs to Thee. Deal with us very gently, for we are only children.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*Divine Gifts and Human Gratitude.* The blessings of the day are the gifts of God. They are too numerous to be reckoned, and too often we take them as if they were our due. And the best of these gifts is a soul sensitive to their presence and value. For what we know as good and ill may alike be found to minister to the life of the spirit. Our misfortunes, though not sent of God, are a part of the discipline by which we are educated for eternity. Therefore, we display the highest quality of gratitude if, in counting our blessings, we include our hardships and burdens as benignant and not baneful providences.

✚

Scripture—Thou visitest the earth and waterest it, thou greatly enrichest it....Thou crownest the year with thy goodness, and thy paths drop fatness.—*Psalm 65:9, 11.*

✚

For Summer's bloom and Autumn's blight,
For bending wheat and blasted maize,
For health and sickness, Lord of light
And Lord of darkness; hear our praise!

—JOSIAH G. HOLLAND
("Bitter-Sweet.")

✚

Prayer—Dear God, and Father of mankind, we commit ourselves and all men into Thy care. Thou hast guided us through this week. Make Thy continued presence with us the solace of our lives and the assurance that nothing can separate us from Thy love. All the order of nature is Thy plan. May we see in it the work of a loving and provident Friend. Upon our home and our hearts let Thy mercy fall, and give us strength enough for each day's work. At last lead us into the larger life for which we have made ready. For Thy name and for Thy mercy's sake.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Far-reaching Mercy of God.*

How eternally thankful must we be for God's boundless and unstinted grace! The divine mercy reaches to the farthest soul, and it reaches to our deepest sin. There is none of us so good that he needs not to draw upon this surplusage, this overflow, of God's love. Even the saintliest souls feel the need of just such mercy as prodigals pray for. And not one of us is so disobedient and wayward but that Christ may lead him back to the Father whose tender mercy more than equals all our guilt.

✚

Scripture—Wherefore also he is able to save unto the uttermost them that draw near unto God by him. —*Heb. 7:25.*

✚

He taught me all the mercy, for he showed me all the sin.
Now, though my lamp was lighted late, there's One will let me in.

—ALFRED TENNYSON
("The May Queen.")

✚

Prayer—We desire, O Father, to be in Thy Holy Spirit on this holy day. We thank Thee for Christ, the Lamb of God who bears away the sin of the world. May this good day witness the removal of our sin, through Thy forgiveness and our repentance. May we hide our fears and failures behind the cross of Christ. May we enter Thy house today with thankfulness and the will to worship. And at the end of the way bring us to the House not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*Prayer for One Day.*

Battles are not won in a complete series of tactics, but in the successful achievement of each objective in its order. In the discipline of our soul it seems enough if we can meet the tests of one day at a time. Praying for tomorrow and its need too often lifts our attention from the task that is at our hand, and if this habit of anticipatory prayer be too long indulged our spiritual life passes into a mere day-dream. Our prayer should keep today with its need in the foreground, for the present is big with destiny.

✣

Scripture—And the children of Israel said unto Jehovah, We have sinned; do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee; only deliver us, we pray thee, this day.—*Judg. 10:15.*

✣

Breathe Thy pure breath, watching Father,
On this marred day of Thine,
This wandering day of mine;
Be patient with its blur and blot,
Wash it white of stain and spot.
Reproachful eyes! Remember not
That I have grieved Thee
On this day of Thine!

—ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS ("A Prayer.")

✣

Prayer—Holy Father, help us to plan our lives as if the day upon whose path we have now set foot were the only one we should have. We know that too often our time is marred by the false security in which we rest, feeling that we have all the days, and that a few hours of wasted time can mean no harm in our fabric of life. Help us, O Father, to know that time is Thine and not ours. We ask Thee to help us in our effort to repair the mistakes of the past, and to make fewer in the future, till we have no more wasted hours, but all shall bear fruit for Thee, now and in a world without end.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*The Call to Repentance.*

To repent is not simply to be sorry for our wrongdoing, though sorrow and regret are essential to repentance. It is rather to take a new point of view from which our sin will be not only regretted but positively hated. Repentance implies a changed mind, a right-about-face for our soul, a new outlook. Nor is it an act that we accomplish once for all, at the beginning of our Christian life. Rather is it a spiritual attitude that we carry continually with us as a habit of the soul, whereby we make it possible for Christ to repair and redeem us when we fall into temptation.

✣

Scripture—In those days cometh John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judea; saying, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.—*Matt. 3:1, 2.*

✣

There burst he forth: "All ye, whose hopes rely
On God, with me amidst these deserts mourn;
Repent, repent, and from old errors turn."
Who listened to his voice, obeyed his cry?
Only the echoes, which he made relent,
Rung from their marble caves, "Repent, repent!"

—DRUMMOND OF HAWTHORNDEN ("Sonnets.")

✣

Prayer—Our Father, we acknowledge our deep need of the summons to the holy life. We have often made the mistake of expecting blessing from a change of circumstances, when we should have sought a change of character. We have often laid the blame of our failures upon our surroundings, rather than ourselves. Thou desirest truth in the inward parts. Purge us from all hypocrisy and self-deceit. Make us truly penitent, and forgive our sins. For Jesus' sake.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*The Freedom Which Christ Gives.*

Not the least among the boons which our Savior brings to humanity is the sense of moral freedom. Paul gloried in it. He felt that he was no longer under the smothering restrictions of law and rule, but under grace. Bound as he was by love to his Lord, he found delight in doing those things that pleased his Lord. This freedom from the tyranny of rules comes to us only when we learn so to love Christ that our own heart prompts us to do those things that are consistent with his character and will.

✚

Scripture—Jesus said, If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.—*John 8:31, 32.*

✚

Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage;
Minds innocent and quiet take
That for a hermitage;
If I have freedom in my love,
And in my soul am free,
Angels alone, that soar above,
Enjoy such liberty.

—RICHARD LOVELACE ("From Prison.")

✚

Prayer—We bless Thee, Lord, that Thy service is perfect liberty. When we have followed the devices of our own hearts and thought ourselves free, then have we been most the slaves of foolish and vain things. But Thou, O Lord, canst lead us into the freedom that finds its secret in the truth, and brings no sense of shame. Grant us Thy presence as we turn to our work. May we do with our might what falls to our hands, in the spirit of freedom and joy. And may the evening bring us quiet and the night its rest, under Thy benediction. For Christ's sake.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*The Possession of God.*

God is to be adored, but He is also to be used. Merely to worship Him in awe of His greatness and holiness is not to please Him fully. He wants us to draw upon Him, to treat Him as an asset of our practical life and as a priceless possession. We live in Him; but He also lives in us, to bring to our soul the power of His own infinite life. To possess Him is to possess all things and to have power to attain our noblest purposes.

✚

Scripture—Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. —*Psalm 73:25.*

✚

As Thou art all, so be Thou all to me,
First, midst, and last, converted One and Three!
My Faith, my Hope, my Love; in this estate,
My judge, my witness, and my advocate!

—BEN JONSON
("To Heaven.")

✚

Prayer—O God, Thou Friend of all who lift their hearts in prayer, we humbly beseech Thee to grant us the blessing of Thy presence, the favor of Thy good will. Without Thee we cannot live; without Thee we dare not die. Satisfy us early with Thy mercy, and give us the comfort of Thy gracious Spirit. Then shall we live all our earthly days in hope, and enter hereafter into the joy of our Lord.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*Restless Earth and Calm Heavens.*

Our western world has taught us to take pride in our busy activities, as contrasted with the quietude of oriental life. But destiny may at last set a question mark upon much of our hurry and bustle. Too often we find that what has engaged us has proved to be mere strenuous futility. And even at its best our untidy haste often leaves our inner life quite unfurnished. Nature's calmness, especially the calmness and steadiness of the sky, has its lesson for our soul. Our little, restless earth and our little, breathless lives will take on dignity and deeper worth if we catch step with the rhythmic movement of the quiet stars.

✣

Scripture—Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not?—*Isa. 55:2.*

Look unto the heavens and see, and behold the skies which are higher than thou.—*Job 35:5.*

✣

Into those skies our factories rise,
Our engines dash through golden thrones;
In those calm eyes is no surprise,
There drop no loosened chalcedones.

—THOMAS HEMPSTED ("The World of Spirits.")

✣

Prayer—Holy and righteous God, we confess before Thee the sins that make us displeasing to Thee. We waste our strength in the effort to win things that lose their value and charm as soon as we gain them. Our time is lost in the winning of that which does not last. Yet Thou art the same calm and loving God. Thou hast seen all these wasting efforts made before, and Thou dost tarry in patience till we learn our hard lesson by failure and come back to Thee for rest. Help us to see the truth before we waste too much of the good day. For Christ's sake.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*Craving the Whole of Life.*

Religion has too long suffered by an interpretation which made it, in effect, a constriction of life. It has been stated in terms of what must be given up. But it should be stated in terms of the immensity of interest the soul takes on. For religion is the response of our life to the call of the infinite and eternal, and this in no mere far-off and abstract sense, but in its most immediate and concrete realization. Common things take on a new light, and nothing in the world or out of it is alien to the soul that hears and heeds the call of Christ.

✚

Scripture—He hath set the world in their heart. —*Eccl. 3:11.*

For all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.—*1 Cor. 3:21-23.*

✚

I caught the sparrow's note from heaven,
Singing at dawn from the alder bough:
I brought him home; in his nest at even
He sings the song, but it pleases not now:
For I did not bring home the river and sky;
He sang to my ear, — they sang to my eye.

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON
("Each and All.")

✚

Prayer—Loving Father, we bless Thee for the joy of this new day. We undertake its work with deep thankfulness that we have our appointed tasks and familiar duties. And we also thank Thee for the breadth of vision which we enjoy because we are Thy children. Thou hast set the world in our hearts. Every interest of human life is somehow made our own in this wide comradeship with all men. Make this for us a true preparation for the unlimited joys and duties of the life eternal. We pray in Jesus' name. —*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*God's Presence in His House.*

God's Spirit is everywhere, but He reveals Himself to our hearts with special graciousness in the place set apart for divine worship. It is not strange that this is so. A congregation singing His praise, reading His Word, thinking together upon some theme of the spiritual life and offering a common prayer, carries a blessing to each individual worshipper which no one can quite attain in solitude. It is important that we prepare our hearts in advance by quieting our anxieties and meditating upon the love of God, so that we may enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise.

✝

Scripture—The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.—*Hab. 2:20.*

Let us have thankfulness, whereby we may offer service well pleasing to God, with reverence and awe. —*Heb. 12:28.*

✝

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
Forgive our feverish ways.
Reclothe us in our rightful mind;
In purer lives Thy service find,
In deeper reverence, praise.

—JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER
("Longing for Peace.")

✝

Prayer—O Lord, we thank Thee for the day of rest. May it be to us a foretaste of that rest which remains for the people of God. May we revere the House of God, and enter it with joy, bringing our offerings of thankfulness and praise. Bless the preaching of Thy Word today, and may its gracious results abide in many lives, and most of all in our own. Keep us from sin this day and may we run into no kind of error. For Jesus' sake.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*The World-wide Sway of Christ.*

It is no petty or provincial thing that our Lord has undertaken to do in the world. He has projected a kingdom that is to be world-wide. This is the glory of our Christianity. Our God is no tribal deity, but the Father of all mankind. He calls us all to share with Him in extending His sway in human life until the last man has heard the gospel and become a Christian; and not only until the last man, but the last nation or group of men, and the last social institution, shall have accepted the rule of love and the ideal of Christian brotherhood.

✚

Scripture—He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. —*Psalm 72:8.*

✚

For him shall endless prayer be made
And endless praises crown his head;
His name like sweet perfume shall rise
With every morning sacrifice.

—ISAAC WATTS ("The Messiah.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we thank Thee that Thou hast called us to share with Thee in so notable a task as the evangelization of the world. Christ must reign over all the nations by the glad acceptance of his message and ideals. Thou hast honored us with the enterprise of bringing this to pass. Expand our thoughts in the contemplation of such a glorious service. May we be no longer satisfied with trivial things. Assist us to be worthy of our high calling. May we plan generous things for Thy kingdom. And may our Master approve our service.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*The Blessing of Night and Its Rest.*

Nature has no half hinges. For each need there is a satisfaction. For the eye there is light, for the ear there is sound, for the wing there is air, and for the tired body there is the darkness and quiet of the night. To primitive peoples the black mystery of the dark was appalling. To children frightened by ignorant and senseless tales of terror it is still fearsome. But to those of happy and confident spirit it is the space in which God giveth His beloved sleep. For the solemn hush and brooding calm of the night we are ever grateful.

✚

Scripture—When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid; yea, thou shalt lie down and thy sleep shall be sweet. —*Prov. 3:24.*

✚

O, holy night! from thee I learn to bear
What man has borne before!
Thou layest thy finger on the lips of care,
And they complain no more.

—HENRY W. LONGFELLOW
("Hymn to the Night.")

✚

Prayer—Holy Father, we bless Thee for the day with its work, and for the night which brings its rest. Into Thy loving care we resign ourselves when night closes about us, for it is Thy gift, and Thou doest all things well. May each night bring us its renewal of strength, and when we rise may it be with the thought that we are still with Thee. We ask in the spirit of Jesus.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*The Triumph of Patience.*

It is not the thought of the Bible writers that the patience that is to be commended is either a state of indifference to evil, or a mild and weak consenting to wrongs that ought to be resisted. It is rather a quality of self-control that preserves the soul from petulance and complaining, that gives it strength to endure, that endows it with dignity and calmness in the midst of confusion and opposition. There are times when protest and resistance become a duty. But most of the difficulties of life yield to patience, self-control and the restraint of passion and hasty speech.

✚

Scripture—We call them blessed which endured: ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, how that the Lord is full of pity and merciful. —*James 5:11.*

In your patience ye shall win your souls.—*Luke 21:19.*

✚

I mention still
Him, whom thy wrongs, with saintly patience borne,
Made famous in a land and times obscure:
Who names not now with honor patient Job?

—JOHN MILTON ("Paradise Regained.")

✚

Prayer—Hear us in Thy mercy, gracious Lord, when we draw near with our imperfect supplication. Grant us the patience that overcomes all difficulties through faith in God. We thank Thee for the lives that illustrate the great virtues which beautify character. May we not think the days of heroism past forever, but rather then more earnestly seek for ourselves the graces that endure. In putting out of our lives wrath, malice and hasty speech, help us to win the true victory. Our Master is our supreme example. Help us to follow him.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*The Precious Story of Jesus.*

Of the countless books that have been written and that have blessed mankind we could part with all rather than with the sweet story of the Child who was born in Bethlehem's inn, grew up to young manhood at Nazareth, taught his disciples by the seaside and in the grain fields and in the homes of his friends, was taken by the harsh hands of wicked men and slain on Calvary, was buried, and raised from the dead on the third day, and now lives with God and in the hearts of his followers, bringing salvation to all men.

✚

Scripture—That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life . . . declare we unto you. —*1 John 1:1,3.*

✚

That story, aye, that life and death
Of which I wrote, "It was," to me it is;
Is here and now, I apprehend naught else.

—ROBERT BROWNING
("A Death in the Desert.")

✚

Prayer—Great and merciful art Thou, O Lord. Marvelous are Thy gifts to us. Thy praise is on our lips when we think of Thy goodness, and more especially since the life of Christ has made real to us Thy loving character. Save us, we pray Thee, from the mistake of putting him out of our lives by the intrusion of other interests. May he come into our hearts and drive out every hostile thing, even as he drove the traders from the house of God. And may he abide with us forever.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Wonder of Love.*

Love is the great revealer. We do not truly know until we have learned to love. A great teacher, striving to understand and explain life by reason, found that the heart had reasons which the reason did not know. It is in our loves and our loyalties that God makes his most intimate and revealing contacts with our souls.

✚

Scripture—Many waters cannot quench love; neither can the floods drown it; if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly contemned. —*Song of Songs 8:7.*

✚

The night has a thousand eyes,
And the day but one;
Yet the light of the bright world dies
With the dying sun.

The mind has a thousand eyes,
And the heart but one;
Yet the light of a whole life dies
When love is done.

—FRANCIS BOURDILLON
("The Night Has a Thousand Eyes.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, Thou hast revealed Thy love to us, even while we were yet sinners. Make plain to us, we beseech Thee, the way of our duty, and the happiness that comes from loving Thee and our fellowmen. Let there be no complaining at Thy providence, no wrong or evil thought. Preserve those who are in high position from pride of success, and those who are obscure from bitterness. Bring peace with righteousness to the troubled world. And may the love that thinketh no evil abide in our hearts. —*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*The Value of Goodness.*

No talent or attainment can compensate for the lack of goodness. Not alone at the final judgment will it be made plain that the simple things of character are the all-important things, but here and now, in our daily life, we know that there are no rewards so rich in peace and happiness as those our soul gathers along the modest pathway of simple goodness and loyalty.

✚

Scripture—Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful....He shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water.—*Psalm 1:1, 3.*

✚

Man is his own star, and the soul that can
Render an honest and a perfect man,
Commands all light, all influence, all fate;
Nothing to him falls early or too late;
Our acts our angels are, or good or ill,
Our fatal shadows that walk by us still.

—JOHN FLETCHER
("Upon an Honest Man's Fortune.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father who art in heaven, we want to live lives of goodness, gentleness, truth, and courage. We want to be useful, because there is much to do, and we have not long to stay. We want to be happy, and we know that goodness is the best road to happiness. We want to help our fellow-men to achieve the same virtues which we desire. Thou wilt help us in the attainment of our good purposes, for we ask in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*Faith Through Prayer.*

In the life of the spirit we are ever coming upon experiences in which the law of cause and effect seems to operate in a circle. Faith and prayer afford a good illustration of this phenomenon. We cannot pray without faith, yet we cannot have faith without prayer. Each is cause of the other. But we need not hesitate to accept both faith and prayer on this basis, for it is not otherwise in our daily life. We learn to trust a friend by simply trusting him. Our faith in him grows as our friendship deepens, and our friendship deepens with our growing faith. Thus faith in God comes by companionship with Him in the practice of His presence in prayer, and His companionship grows more real and sure and comforting as our faith strikes deeper root into our soul.

✚

Scripture—Lord, teach us to pray.—*Luke 11:1.*

✚

Let blow the trumpet strongly when I pray,
Till this embattled wall of unbelief,
My prison, not my fortress, fall away!
Then, if Thou willest, let my day be brief,
So Thou wilt strike Thy glory through the day.

—ALFRED TENNYSON
("Doubt and Prayer.")

✚

Prayer—Our heavenly Father, we find that we need all the aids to faith which Thy care and love have provided us. We see the present with such distinctness, and the future so dimly, that we are tempted to content ourselves with the things in sight. Draw us by Thy mercies, if Thou canst; drive us by sore troubles if need be, to the joy and the confidence of prayer. May the assembly of Thy people this day strengthen our souls for the morrow and for all the days, and may the week upon which we have now entered reveal to us more than ever before Thy presence and our need of Thee. For Jesus' sake.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*Thy Kingdom Come.*

Our Lord desired for himself and all his friends the attainment of the will of God. It was his faith that the future would see the divine ideals brought to increasing realization. This order of righteousness he called the Kingdom of God, the reign of justice and love in the world. For this Jesus labored, and for this he taught his followers to pray, in his spirit of sincere effort to make the prayer come true.

✚

Scripture—Thy kingdom come; thy will be done as in heaven, so on earth.—*Matt. 6:10.*

✚

Thine own prayer to Thy listening ears
Ceases not, night nor day.
"Christ's kingdom come!" through all the years,
Men every moment pray.
It travels with the earth around,
Beneath all countries' skies,
North, South — wherever men are found,
Dawn breaks and prayers arise.

—MARIANNE FARNINGHAM
("Without Ceasing.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we have prayed the prayer our Savior taught us, and its words grow increasingly dear to us. But we confess with shame that we have not given ourselves with whole-hearted surrender to the task of helping in its realization. We want to see the gospel preached in all lands. And we consecrate ourselves anew and more fully to assist in the work. Help us, Father, to have a due part in the evangelization of all peoples, till "the whole round world is every way bound by gold chains about the feet of God." —*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*God's Presence Everywhere.*

To attain to a satisfactory conception of God is most difficult for even the wisest of men. Yet most of us deserve rebuke because we do not allow our thought of God to grow with our mental growth; we carry our childhood ideas of God into our mature life. We think of God too much as "up there," when He is just as truly "down here." We may be sure that we shall find Him wherever we may go. We cannot flee Him with our sins, nor need we go far to find Him when we need comfort and healing.

✚

Scripture—If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. —*Psalm 139:9, 10.*

✚

Cast all your cares on God; that anchor holds.
Is he not yonder in the uttermost
Parts of the morning? If I flee to these,
Can I go from Him? and the sea is His,
The sea is His; He made it.

—ALFRED TENNYSON ("Enoch Arden.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we offer Thee our grateful love because of this new day in which to labor, and to enjoy the gifts of Thy love. We would abide with Thee. We would not try to escape from Thee. Such effort would be futile and ungrateful. Thou art with us everywhere, and in that fact is our confidence. Give to all our loved ones this same sense of Thy presence. And bring us at last to Thyself. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*Christ's Divinely Human Work.*

In the life of our Lord we have the supreme example of tireless yet satisfying activity. He found his rest not in the cessation of labor, but in ever fresh forms of helpful service. We are unjust to him and we rob ourselves of much of the inspiration and power of his life if we conceive him as only *acting* a human rôle while in reality living above our human level in some detached and transcendant order of being. Without sacrificing any portion of his divinity, we must bear in mind that our Lord was thoroughly implicit with us in the great adventure of living, and that he met the same problems and temptations that we meet, winning at last the victory which evermore is the aim and goal of our own lives.

✚

Scripture—I have glorified thee on the earth, having accomplished the work thou gavest me to do.—*John 17:4.*

✚

Day and night our Jesus makes no pause,
Pleads His own fulfillment of all laws,
Veils with His perfections mortal flaws,
Clears the culprit, pleads the desperate cause,
Plucks the dead from death's devouring jaws,
And the worm that gnaws.

—CHRISTINA ROSSETTI
("Day and Night.")

✚

Prayer—Merciful Father, we thank Thee for Jesus Christ, Thy unspeakable gift. We worship Thee with joy as we recall his human birth, his life of love and work, his sacrificial death, his resurrection, and his glorious life in heaven. Grant us power from on high that our lives may be like his, our labors constant and effective, our faith unshaken and our witness clear and strong. Give to all who suffer the patience of hope in Christ.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*The Importance of Today.*

Between two worlds, yesterday and tomorrow, one dead, the other waiting to be born, there stands today — our one possession, quivering with possibility, laden with incalculable treasure. How the curve of our life may be changed by what we do or leave undone today is beyond our power to predict. The instant and far-reaching significance of even an hour cannot be exaggerated. Yet we must not strain our soul with over-stressed practicalities. It is important to remember the place of leisure and calmness in the making of character and in the perfecting of companionships. Here, as everywhere, we may take our Lord's example, who combined in ideal proportion a life of steady labor with leisure for friendship, graciousness and inner joy.

✚

Scripture—For we are come in a good day. —*1 Sam. 25: 8.*

Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. —*Heb. 3:7.*

✚

Today,
Unsullied, comes to thee new-born;
Tomorrow is not thine,
The sun may cease to shine
For thee, ere earth shall greet its morn.

—JOHN RUSKIN ("Today.")

✚

Prayer—It is of Thy mercy, our heavenly Father, that we have come in life and health to this new day of Thine. Our hearts glow with gratitude at the thought of Thy goodness to us. We ask only that we may so use the day that at its close we may feel it has been well worth while to have lived. And may we also call to mind the steps that we have this day taken toward the better life, and the house not made with hands. In Jesus' name.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*Our Lord's Temptation.*

No conception of the temptation of Jesus that makes of it a mere pageant of victory can satisfy. If our Lord was by nature lifted above the pull and drag of the vast evil in the world, then his experience means little to us who have to fight for character day by day. But it is our comfort to be assured past all uncertainty that he won his victory through struggle, even as we must do. Into the shadow of his sorrow and agony it is our right to enter, that with him we may emerge cleansed and victorious by the grace of God.

✣

Scripture—Who, in the days of his flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong cryings and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, was heard for his godly fear.—*Heb. 5:7.*

✣

My sins, my sins, my Saviour!
Their guilt I never knew
Till with Thee in the desert I near
Thy passion drew;
Till with Thee in the garden
I heard Thy pleading prayer,
And saw the sweat-drops bloody,
That told Thy sorrow there.

—J.B.S. MONSELL
("Confession.")

✣

Prayer—O God, there is forgiveness with Thee, and plenteous redemption. We confess with sorrow that we have resisted the Spirit of grace, and hindered his quickening power. We have been cold to our fellow-believers, scornful toward those we counted less worthy, and indifferent to the divine call to service. Yet turn us not away, our Father, but receive us, though unworthy. Continue to lead us, Guide of our souls, and bring us home in the close of the day.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*Repentance and Tears.*

Ofttimes those whose lives seem placid and untroubled come upon salvation by the way of a broken heart. Some of the richest gifts of life are discovered only through profound and humbling sorrow. In the mystery of Christ's dealing with us, our cowardice, our untruthfulness, our selfish egotism, or any other sin, once revealed to our conscience for what it really is, and truly repented of, becomes the occasion of new life to our soul through God's chastening grace. By repentance and forgiveness we may enter into a deeper spirituality, a more intimate communion with God, a stronger character for ourselves and a finer sympathy with others.

✚

Scripture—And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how that he said unto him, Before the cock crow this day, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out and wept bitterly. —*Luke 22:61, 62.*

✚

That God would move
And strike the hard, hard rock and thence,
Sweet in their utmost bitterness,
Would issue tears of penitence.

—ALFRED TENNYSON
("Supposed Confessions.")

✚

Prayer—Creator and Lover of men, we, like Peter, have denied the Lord who bought us, and with bitter shame confess our sin. We are unworthy, we have come short of Thy glory, we have done much evil. But the Master has looked upon us, and, even while his tender glance broke our hearts, it gave us hope of pardon. May our sorrow lead to humble repentance and amendment of life. Lift us up with Christ, and give us eternal life in him. Forgive all our sins, and answer us with Thy mercy, through Christ Jesus our Lord.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Present Christ.*

Over against the morbid expectations of those who imagine that Christ has left the world, and that he must be expected to return in some spectacular manner before righteousness can prevail in the earth, we have need evermore to set the heartening words of our Lord, wherein he promised his continued and unending presence with his disciples. He is not in some distant heaven, waiting for a suitable hour to revisit his people. He is with us in the midst of the day's work, in all our personal experiences, and leading in the mighty enterprise of bringing the whole round world in faith and obedience ever nearer to the feet of God.

✣

Scripture—Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.—*Matt. 28:20.*

✣

No fable old, nor mythic lore,
    No dream of bards and seers,
No dead fact stranded on the shore
    Of the oblivious years,—

But warm, sweet, tender, even yet
    A present help is he;
And faith hath still its Olivet,
    And love its Galilee.

—JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER
("Our Master.")

✣

Prayer—We bless Thee, O Lord, for Thy mercy to us on this good day. Thou holdest our souls in life, and art ever ready to hear our prayer. May the voice of thanksgiving rise today like incense from the souls Thou hast delivered from sin. Let the music of the sanctuary be heard on all shores. May the presence of Christ be very evident to his people, and may the gospel be preached with power from on high. Far and wide in human hearts may praise abound and faith prevail. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. —*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*The Sheep That Must Be Gathered.*

The utter absence of any form of sectarianism in the mind of our Lord is one of the secrets of his great influence in human life. Born among a people who believed themselves the particular objects of God's solicitude, Jesus saw beyond the narrow sheep-fold of Israel and took all nations into his heart. He established his Kingdom on no arbitrary or sectarian doctrine or practice, but on the great universals of the spiritual life. We truly follow him only as we cultivate in our soul his catholicity, his freedom from all arbitrary exclusiveness and his sense of fellowship with all men who earnestly seek after God.

✚

Scripture—And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also must I bring, and they shall hear my voice, and they shall become one flock, one shepherd. —*John 10:16.*

✚

Gather us in: we worship only Thee;
In varied names we stretch a common hand;
In diverse forms a common soul we see;
In many ships we seek one spirit-land;
Gather us in!

—GEORGE MATHESON
("Gather Us In.")

✚

Prayer—Father of all mankind, we hail with gladness the signs of Christ's advancing kingdom. Not till all the nations know and love him shall we be satisfied. The promises of Thy Word are very precious to us, and they assure us that every knee shall bow to him, in reverence and glad surrender. Give us a share, we beseech Thee, in this great work of world-wide evangelism. Fill our souls with the broadening and enriching purposes of the cross. May nothing less than the best we can do for the advancement of the great cause satisfy us, and may the offerings we make of life and possession be such as we dare place in the pierced hand of our Lord. In his name.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*Son of Man, and Son of God.*

Into the mystery of the nature of Jesus scholars and saints have gazed with eagerness, but never with finality of assurance. His unique character still transcends our human intelligence. But if we cannot fully understand his nature we know that we may call him Brother and Friend, Lord and Savior, Son of Man and Son of God.

✚

Scripture—We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.—*John 1:45.*

Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.—*John 20:28.*

✚

If Jesus Christ is a man,—
And only a man, — I say
That of all mankind I cleave to him,
And to him will I cleave alway.

If Jesus Christ is a God, —
And the only God, — I swear
I will follow him through heaven and hell,
The earth, the sea, and the air.

—RICHARD WATSON GILDER
("The Song of a Heathen.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we thank Thee for Jesus, who has lived with us as a true son of man, sharing all our human estate. In his daily tasks, in his love of his family and his friends, and in his faithfulness to all the duties of life, he has set before us the supreme example. But most of all we thank Thee that he has become our Savior and Lord, our Elder Brother and our King. Make us all members of Thy holy Family through faith and faithfulness. May we follow Jesus in the ways of his humility, that we also may follow him to the throne of his glory.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*Armed and Waiting.*

There is a kind of tarrying which is only idleness — the indolent inaction of an unprepared, hesitant and wavering nature. But there is also the waiting of those who with solemn self-preparation, with girded loin and watchful spirit, abide the moment of action. This calm and quiet waiting is also service.

✚

Scripture—Having done all, stand. Stand, therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breast-plate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace. —*Eph. 6:13, 14, 15.*

✚

God doth not need
Either man's work, or his own gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best; his state
Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait.

—JOHN MILTON
("On his Blindness.")

✚

Prayer—Dear Father, it is not always easy to restrain our souls when we behold the world's need of work, and hear the call of Christ. But teach us the need of quietness and obedience as well. It is not by activity alone that we can fulfill Thy pleasure. Sometimes we are appointed to silent service and waiting that is difficult and seems in vain. Teach us, we pray Thee, the patience that tarries and is at rest, because it is Thy will. Help us to arm ourselves in readiness for Thy call, and having done all, to stand. For Christ's sake. —*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*Wrestling with God.*

In spite of God's gracious willingness to answer our prayers, there is an aspect of our prayer life that we can describe only as a kind of wrestling with the divine will for the mastery. To all of us at times come crises of struggle when through the long night there seems no relief. But we may comfort our hearts with the thought that in some mystic disguise it is the angel of God with whom we wrestle, and that the weary hours of the hot and heavy night will end with the purple dawn when the day is cool and the shadows flee away.

✚

Scripture—And Jacob was left alone, and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. —*Gen. 32:24.*

✚

Like that strange angel, which of old,
Until the breaking of the light,
Wrestled with wandering Israel.

—ALFRED TENNYSON
("To ————")

✚

Prayer—O God, we thank Thee that Thou art with us in the darkness as in the light. When the night had settled upon us in trouble, and we feared the coming of another day, we have been forced to cling to Thee, like Jacob of old, till Thou shouldst bring us deliverance. Then have we wrestled in prayer, unwilling to let Thee go until Thou shouldst bless us. And we have not called upon Thee in vain. Merciful Father, comfort us in our affliction, and lift up the hands that are weak. Make known Thyself to us in the hour of need, and may the dawn find us still clinging to Thee, and happy in the victory of prayer.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Foolishness of the Gospel.*

To a certain kind of intellectual culture the gospel has always seemed a crude and homely, even a foolish message. Its first interpreters were scorned by those accounted the wisest of their age, and its latest messengers often go unheeded. Wherever self-confidence and intellectual arrogance have prevailed, there the word of the cross has been counted of little worth. But those who have learned its secret have another conviction, and therein lies the assurance of wisdom and peace.

✚

Scripture—But we preach Christ crucified, unto Jesus a stumbling block, and unto Greeks foolishness; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.—*1 Cor. 1:23, 24.*

✚

> One called Paulus; we have heard his fame,
> Indeed, if Christus be not one with him —
> I know not, nor am troubled much to know.
> Thou canst not think a mere barbarian Jew
> As Paulus proves to be, one circumcised,
> Hath access to a secret shut from us!
>
> —ROBERT BROWNING ("Cleon.")

✚

Prayer—O Lord, our Father, we thank Thee for the gospel of salvation. How little has the wisdom of the world understood its meaning and entered into its spirit. We recall the fate that befell those who first carried the good news of Christ to the world. But we now know that the cross is set for the winning of the world, and we are gladdened by the signs of its triumph. Show us, O Father, the wisdom that is from above, that we, being taught of the divine Spirit, may escape the folly of unbelief, and may enter, with the apostles and witnesses of all the ages, into enduring joy. For Christ's sake.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*The Passing World.*

Nothing can have real value that does not last. There is much that is interesting in life that has this fundamental limitation: it does not endure. To learn to distinguish between the things that pass and the things that abide is the secret of wisdom and happiness. While the things that pass are accessible to the few, God has so ordered His world that the enduring things, the invaluable things of character and grace and immortality, are open to us all and may be had for the asking.

✣

Scripture—For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vain glory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.—*1 John 2:16, 17.*

✣

Then came brave Glory puffing by
In silks that whistled, who but he!
He scarce allowed me half an eye;
But thou shalt answer, Lord, for me.

—GEORGE HERBERT ("The Quip.")

✣

Prayer—Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. In honoring Thee we find our chief satisfaction, in serving Thee our highest gain. Save us from holding in too high esteem the things that will not last. Write Thy warnings upon our consciences, we beseech Thee. May we find the joy that comes not from selfish pleasure, but from the love of Thy little ones, the poor, the hungry and the sick. Forgive us that we so often forget Thee and the needy ones whom Thou lovest. Teach us to walk humbly, soberly, unselfishly, by the power of the world to come. And bring us to Thyself at last, for Christ's sake.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*A Fresh Beginning.*

God's goodness is disclosed to us in His many provisions for ever fresh departures upon the great adventure of life. Our souls are often confused and entangled in their own indirections, like sheep that have lost their way and are caught in the meshes of the wood. Whereupon, instead of leaving us to our hopeless devices, God sets us in the path again. Through nature and the ordinary round of life the divine goodness presents us with these new opportunities. Sleep blots out much of the trouble and bafflement of the day, and with the coming of dawn we stand at a fresh beginning, unencumbered by yesterday's burden. The Lord's Day brings us to a similar new departure in our week of days. It is a chance to freshen our vision, to gird again our loins, and to grip our unfinished task with renewed zeal and resolution.

✚

Scripture—This is the day which Jehovah hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.—*Psalm 118: 24.*

✚

Every day is a fresh beginning;
Listen, my soul, to the glad refrain,
And spite of old sorrow and older sinning,
Take heart with the day and begin again.

—SUSAN COOLIDGE ("New Day.")

✚

Prayer—Holy Father, we Thy children come to Thee in the opening of this another day of Thine own making. It comes to us fresh from Thy hand, and calls us to a new and holy sense of Thy power and love as expressed in nature and in the daily comforts of our lives; but most of all in the privilege of worship that this good day brings. We feel like making a new start on our way to the eternal life. We are not at all satisfied with our progress hitherto. We should like to do nobler things, and we mean to try. Grant us Thy help in this new endeavor. In Jesus' name.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*Waiting for God.*

Tarrying in calmness of soul until God is ready is one of the most difficult of virtues. It often requires a higher order of faith than does action. After we have done our human part, if God seems to be slow in getting things under way, it tests our faith to wait for Him. But such faith, such calm patience, never loses its reward.

✚

Scripture—Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you. . . .Blessed are all they that wait for him.—*Isa. 30:18.*

✚

Why should I try to hasten my Lord
With the voice of a clamorous prayer?
Do I not know Him, who long ago,
Took me into His care?
Love does not tarry a needless time,
And the hand of His power is swift,
Oh, lips be silent; oh, heart be strong,
Till He shall with strength uplift!

—MARIANNE FARNINGHAM
("A Song of Waiting.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, teach us the patience that is willing to wait for Thy leading, when it seems to be Thy pleasure that we should only stand and wait. Help us to know that Thou art honored as much by our silence as by our speech, by our repose as well as our activity, and always by our patient preparation, more than by our haste to be in motion. But may all our day, whether active or at rest, be submitted to Thy holy will.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*The Word of God.*

In many voices God speaks to the listening heart of the world. Never has there been silence between the Infinite and the soul of man. But in the Bible there is gathered a collection of messages from men who have proved themselves the truest interpreters of God, filled with His Spirit. For proof of the Bible's unique place in our human life we need seek no laborious argument. We need only in simple trust to commit our soul to its teaching and it will prove itself divine.

✚

Scripture—How sweet are thy words unto my taste, yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth. Through thy precepts I get understanding : therefore I hate every false way. —*Psalm 119:103, 104.*

✚

We search the world for truth; we cull
The good, the pure, the beautiful
From graven stone and written scroll,
From all old flower-fields of the soul;
And, weary seekers of the best,
We come back laden from our quest,
To find that all the sages said
Is in the Book our mothers read.

—JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER ("Miriam.")

✚

Prayer—Heavenly Father, Thy Word is a lamp unto our feet and a light to our path. It has come to us like a precious legacy from the past. We do not understand all of its wonderful meanings, but we discover in it ever deeper springs of wisdom and of life. Through the ages it discloses new truth to each generation. It endures, while men and institutions pass. May we study it that we may catch its spirit, and see how the men who have written down for us their messages and experiences upon its pages have spoken for God, and that through them God ever speaks to us. Most of all, may we see that the heart of the Book is Christ, the Light of the World.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*The Far-off Divine Event.*

Faith is not satisfied with the conception of a sudden and catastrophic end of the world. We believe that God will prove His power and wisdom by progressively winning the world to Himself through the extension of the gospel and the increasing incarnation of the spirit of Jesus in the lives of men. That is the "one far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves."

✚

Scripture—He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet.—*1 Cor. 15:24, 25.*

✚

My own hope is, a sun will pierce
The thickest cloud earth ever stretched;
That after Last returns the First,
Though a wide compass round be fetched;
That what began best, can't end worst,
Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst.

—ROBERT BROWNING
("Apparent Failure.")

✚

Prayer—O God, our Father, we thank Thee that in the life and purpose of our Lord we discern Thy own great plan of the ages. Our hearts would grow faint and discouraged if we could not see the goal toward which we are striving. We cannot obscure from our eyes the present evil world, nor ignore its sin and sorrow. But we can look to the future, and mark the slow but steady coming of Thy kingdom, for whose triumph we ever pray. Comfort our souls, we beseech Thee, with this vision of the better time to be, and grant us a share in its achievement and blessedness. —*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*Perversions of Truth.*

The failure to put things in their right proportion and perspective is a haunting peril and a besetting sin. Few actually wish to pervert truth, but many blunder into error by failure to put the facts of life in their due order. Moral blindness is as disastrous as wilful sin.

✚

Scripture—Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil; that put darkness for light and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.—*Isa. 5:20.*

✚

O purblind race of miserable men!
How many among us at this very hour
Do forge a lifelong trouble for ourselves,
By taking true for false, or false for true;
Here, thro' the feeble twilight of this world
Groping — how many — until we pass and reach
That other, where we see as we are seen.

—ALFRED TENNYSON
("Geraint and Enid.")

✚

Prayer—O God of our life, we would escape the dangers that lie about us in the world, and reach the safe and sheltered life of trust and love. Save us, we pray Thee, from vain and foolish thoughts, from delusions, falsehoods, and self-deception. Knowing the power of untruth to ruin character, to blight happiness, and to bring discord into the world, may we arm ourselves against it, and search our hearts to banish it, wherever found. And may we abide in Christ, who is the Truth.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Wreck and Crush of Worlds.* The changing world has always made upon sensitive souls the impression of having a destined and dramatic end. The close of a period of history is to all intents and purposes the end of the world. But out of each time of ruin and collapse there comes a new and better order. This is the assurance of Christian faith.

✚

Scripture—But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements dissolve with fervent heat, and the works therein shall be burned up.—*2 Peter 3:10.*

✚

> The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit shall dissolve,
> And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
> Leave not a rack behind.
>
> —WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
> ("The Tempest.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, teach us that here we have no continuing city, but that we seek one which hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God. Help us to build on no foundation but Christ, that our house fall not in the day of testing. In the fires of trial may our work abide. Fortify all Thy servants against the sorrow of defeat, and the sense of failure. Bless our home and our household, the young and the old. Give to us, whether our years be few or many, the sense of permanence and confidence in Thee. And grant us redemption through Christ Jesus our Lord. —*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*Gaining the Heights.*

There is nothing too good or too high for the soul. Our Lord enjoined no less a goal than perfection as the end of the long and shining pathway of life. To live is to grow. Character cannot be static; to stop growing is to fall back. We need ever to guard our soul against the acceptance of standards of mere respectability and convention, which inhibit the putting forth of our full endeavor. No standard can inspire us to strive with unceasing vigilance to realize the best that is within us like the personal character of Jesus our Leader.

✚

Scripture—To them that by patience in well doing seek for glory and honor and incorruption, eternal life. —*Rom. 2:7.*

✚

The heights by great men reached and kept
Were not attained by sudden flight;
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upward in the night.

—HENRY W. LONGFELLOW
("The Ladder of St. Augustine.")

✚

Prayer—Refuge and Strength of our souls, we offer Thee our daily adoration. Thou dost beset us behind and before with Thy blessings. Thou dost crown our lives with Thy mercies, so that we have no speech with which to thank Thee. But we know that our best expression of gratitude is a cheerful heart and a ready purpose to bring our lives into likeness to Thine. We thank Thee that salvation does not depend on works of merit, but on Thy pitying grace. Yet help us to be of some service in this our day of life, before we fall asleep. And then receive us to the nobler labors of a world without end.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Unfailing Supply.*

One of the disillusionments of mature experience is the discovery that our real needs are, after all, so very few. Most of our unhappiness comes from the craving for things we do not need. True wisdom is found in a grateful appropriation of our simpler blessings, and a holy ambition to grow rich in the graces of mind and heart, which are the most lavish, yet the least regarded of the divine gifts.

✚

Scripture—Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail.—*1 Kings 17:14.*

✚

I have my cruse of oil,
I have my cake of meal;
I am worn with life's long toil,
The threads are few on the reel.
One by one from the ranks fell out
The mates who joined them with cheer and shout,
When the merry march in the morn begun,
Under the laugh of the rising sun;
One by one they drop to the grave,
Where the pale stars gleam and the grasses wave;
On the surcoat is rent and soil,
The dents are deep on the steel,
Yet I have my cruse of oil,
I have my cake of meal.

—WILLIAM WETMORE STORY ("Tired.")

✚

Prayer—Our Holy Father, our lives are shadowed by Thy providence, which brings us every good and perfect gift. As life goes on, we learn to expect less of the world, for, on their worldly side, many of our dreams fail of realization. Yet we find Thy grace unfailing, and the blessings we have, the daily supply of Thy mercy, prove enough for comfort and happiness. Fill our souls with the contentment that springs from trust in Thee and a grateful heart, and order our ways in love. For Thy name's sake.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*Fear Not, Be Strong.*

Throughout its entire extent life is a trumpet summons to strength and achievement. The Bible assumes that success is always possible to those who believe and make the effort. There are vast stores of divine help at the service of those who claim them. Fear is the arch-enemy of achievement. It paralyzes initiative and renders the soul short-sighted. No true estimate of its resources can be made by a soul seized with fear. But to the man of courage and vision the mountains round about are always full of the chariots of God.

✚

Scripture—So will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing; fear not, but let your hands be strong.—*Zech. 8:13.*

✚

O fear not in a world like this,
And thou shalt know ere long,
Know how sublime a thing it is
To suffer and be strong.

—HENRY W. LONGFELLOW
("The Light of Stars.")

✚

Prayer—Great art Thou, O Lord, and greatly to be praised. From everlasting to everlasting Thou changest not. Help us, we pray Thee, to know Thee with such confidence and appreciation that we may be delivered from fear, from the wavering mind and from all depression of spirit. Open doors of usefulness to us that our influence may reach those who may be helped by it, and our example may be a light to those who are out of the way. May the strength of sin be broken, and the beauty of holiness revealed in us through Jesus Christ our Lord.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*The Double Mind.*

It is quite possible to spoil our good purposes by overmuch thinking. When conscience is thrown into bewilderment by prolonged deliberation the will breaks to pieces, as in the case of Hamlet. His was the curse of the wavering mind, pulled in opposite directions, and unable to choose. Without lessening in any degree our respect for the intellect, we should bear in mind that our duty may often be revealed to us through the promptings of elemental instinct or the more refined intuitions of our souls. We must learn to trust these instincts and intuitions when we find our reasoning powers in a deadlock. Life is made for action, and the habit of hesitance and inconstancy is a blight upon any character.

✣

Scripture—He that doubteth is like the surge of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed. A double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.—*James 1: 6, 8.*

✣

And as one who unwills what he willed,
And with new thoughts changes his purpose,
So that he wholly quits the thing commenced,

Such I made myself on that dim coast;
For with thinking I wasted the enterprise,
That had been so quick in its commencement.

—DANTE ALIGHIERI ("Inferno.")

✣

Prayer—O Lord, we worship Thee as the eternal God. In Thy hands are the deep places of the earth, and the strength of the hills is Thine also. We thank Thee for health, for sanity, and for the will to live a life of purpose and honor. Keep us this day without sin, we beseech Thee, and fulfill the desires of our hearts for firmness and constancy of purpose, for the faith that grows clearer, and for the love that thinks no evil. Pardon our past, we pray Thee, and inspire our future. For Jesus' sake.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*Our Secret Sins.*

The sins hardest to banish are not those known to others, but those hidden away in the dark places of our thought or practice. Publicity tends to purge and consume our sin. The consciousness that our fault is known even to one other mind besides our own tends to deepen our repentance and to strengthen our own soul. Unobserved and unsuspected by others, the secret sins of temper, pride, uncharitableness, and sensuality work disaster, because, being so easily concealed, they make themselves at home within us. Through subtle processes they work their harm in the impairment of character, and end at last in moral overthrow.

✚

Scripture—For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.—*Psalm 31:3.*

Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.—*Psalm 90: 8.*

✚

Thus oft it haps, that when within
They shrink at sense of secret sin,
A feather daunts the brave;
A fool's wise speech confounds the wise,
And proudest princes veil their eyes
Before their meanest slave.

—SIR WALTER SCOTT ("Marmion.")

✚

Prayer—Give us confidence in Thy power and Thy love, O God of our life. We are weary of our ignorance, our pride, our shame and our sins. Drive away our darkness by the light of Thine eternal morning, and clear up the shadowy places in our soul where evil creatures lurk, by the clear shining of Thy presence. Where sin abounds, make Thy grace much more to abound. From the sins that we love in secret, and the self-will that holds us in bondage, grant us deliverance. For we ask in Jesus' name.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*The Hero's Challenge to Death.*

Terrible as war is, it has been a marvelous revealer of many spiritual qualities of whose latent presence in human nature we are not so vividly aware in the routine and comfort of peaceful times. The tension of a great emergency discloses unsuspected degrees and depths of courage, of faith and of unselfishness. Living, as the soldier does, in constant observation and in imminent hazard of death, he comes to feel a certain familiarity with it, and there grows up in his soul, if he is thoughtful, a sense of supremacy and defiance of death. For the hero, duty and love break the spell that death has always cast over the timid heart of man.

✚

Scripture—O death, where is thy sting?—*1 Cor. 15:55.*

✚

I have a rendezvous with Death
At some disputed barricade,
When Spring comes round with rustling shade
And apple blossoms fill the air.
It may be he shall take my hand
And lead me into his dark land
And close my eyes and quench my breath;
It may be I shall pass him; still
I have a rendezvous with Death
On some scarred slope of battered hill;
And I to my pledged word am true,
I shall not fail that rendezvous.

—ALAN SEEGER
("I Have a Rendezvous with Death.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we love our land and the principles for which it stands. More than ever have we loved it since we took our place in the great conflict for world freedom. We thank Thee for the heroic men who, going out to life or death, left fear behind and flung defiance in the face of death. May we be worthy of their devotion and sacrifice and may we learn from them a truer estimate of death and consecration to our ideals.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Bruised Reed.*

There are lives that have been beaten and buffeted until they are stung with a sense of unescapable failure. To such souls it is difficult beyond expression to bring hope and courage. Yet, believing in God's pitying love as we do, we know there must be some divine message of grace and faith that the Father would have them receive. What that message is we may not know, but perhaps it may be conveyed, without speech or formula, simply through our own strength of soul and comradeship and sympathy when we come in contact with them. Through our sincere and uncondescending friendship for those thus bruised and crushed, we may interpret the Friend who once passed this way more bruised and marred than any of the sons of men.

✚

Scripture—A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgement unto victory; and in his name shall the nations hope. —*Isa. 42:3; Matt. 12:20.*

✚

And if my heart and flesh are weak
To bear an untried pain,
The bruised reed He will not break,
But strengthen and sustain.

—JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER
("Eternal Goodness.")

✚

Prayer—Divine Father, in all our disappointments and perplexities do Thou sustain us with Thy comforting presence and Thy Holy Spirit. There are moments when the weight of trouble is very heavy, and our hearts are sore and grieved. Be with us at such times, and let not our courage fail. Thou wilt not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. Thou wilt bring all things to a good ending, for Thou hast appointed Thy saints to victory, and those who love Thee to exceeding joy. Grant us Thy peace, for Christ's sake.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*Humility.*

Of all the virtues none is more difficult for us to possess in delicacy of balance than the virtue of humility. There is a widespread moral misunderstanding which identifies this grace with a lack of self-regard. This sort of selflessness issues in a kind of subserviency in conduct which is both ruinous to one's personality and uncomfortable to ones associates. True humility is consistent with an ennobling self-consideration. It is the grace of seeing oneself in right social perspective: that is, in a relationship with others which allows full respect for their personalities as well as for one's own, and in which one both gives and receives service from others without egotism and without servility.

✚

Scripture—Yea, all of you gird yourselves with humility to serve one another; for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. —*1 Pet. 5:5.*

✚

O son, thou hast not true humility,
The highest virtue, mother of them all;
But her thou hast not known; for what is this?
Thou thoughtest of thy prowess and thy sins;
Thou hast not lost thyself to save thyself.

—ALFRED TENNYSON
("The Holy Grail.")

✚

Prayer—O God, give to Thy servants wisdom in dealing with success. It takes but little to fill us with self-confidence. A little prosperity makes us so likely to forget Thee and the true values of life. Set before us the divine example of our Savior, who took upon him the form of a servant and ministered to the world. Help us to gird on humility, even as he did. And may no false and foolish pride ever rob us of our true happiness in lowly, quiet and effective lives.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*Not Bread Alone.*

The return of the Lord's Day serves to remind us how greatly we depend upon spiritual food for the nourishment and growth of our real life. The suggestions and associations of this day, its quiet, its restfulness, its renewal of personal attachments so difficult to maintain amid the stress and preöccupation of the week-days, its leisure for reading and for communion with nature — all these, illumined and sanctified by the habit and joy of divine worship in God's house, furnish our soul with food which, as compared with our daily bread, is the very bread of life.

✚

Scripture—That he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by everything that proceedeth out of the mouth of Jehovah doth man live. —*Deut. 8:3.*

✚

Whether men sow or reap the fields,
Divine monition nature yields,
That not by bread alone we live,
Or what a hand of flesh can give;
That every day should leave some part
Free for a Sabbath of the heart;
So shall the seventh be truly blest,
From morn to eve, with hallowed rest.

—WILLIAM WORDSWORTH ("Devotional Incitements.")

✚

Prayer—Father of spirits, we adore Thee for the return of this good day of rest and worship. From the work and anxiety of the week we turn to spend a day with the things that endure. Teach us the truth that life consists not in the abundance of the things possessed, and that man does not live by bread alone. With such meditation we would begin the Lord's Day, and complete it with gratitude for the blessing of worship in the House of God.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*The Inspiration of Friendship.*

Great friendships are possible only to great souls. Most of us have acquaintances, associates, companions. Friends are not so easy to acquire. Friendship rests upon more than accidental propinquity, or even association in a common labor. Its roots are ideal, spiritual. Friends find one another on the deeper levels of personality where life's basic interests lie. Only an affinity rooted in common ideals and outlook upon life, in purity of trust, and in unselfish mutual solicitude deserves to be called a friendship. Such a friendship survives many differences and misunderstandings, and enriches the soul in degrees which words cannot express.

✚

Scripture—I behaved myself as though he had been my friend.—*Psalm 35:14.*

A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.—*Prov. 17:17.*

No longer do I call you servants, but I have called you friends.—*John 15:15.*

✚

Me, too, thy nobleness hath taught
To master my despair;
The fountains of my hidden life
Are through thy friendship fair.

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON
("Friendship.")

✚

Prayer—Father of all grace, Thou God of comfort and of strength, we adore Thee for Thine unmeasured kindness to us and to all men, in spite of our many sins and our oftimes forgetfulness of Thee. May the thought of Thy constancy of good will toward us win us to more worthy moods and ideals, that the friendship with which Thou hast honored us may not be wholly beyond our desert. For the friends we have we thank Thee, and we ask that we may ever live in friendship with God and our fellow men. We pray for Thy name's sake.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*City Passions and Perils.*

In its exterior aspect the city seems like the very embodiment of materialism and greed and worldly folly. And there is much to justify this interpretation of its fierce competition, its money madness and its pleasure. Many souls are caught in its tidal power and carried far from the moorings of rational self-control and divine law. But those who know the city on its inward side know its idealism, its yearning for God and for moral nobility; know, too, how many and how strong are the forces that lift up and strengthen and enrich the soul.

✦

Scripture—The great city, the strong city; her merchandise is of gold and silver, and precious stones, and pearls, and fine linen, and purple and silk and scarlet,...and the bodies and the souls of men.—*Rev. 18:10, 12, 13.*

✦

The city is the sea,
  Its waves go to and fro,
And the thunder of its waters
  Rolls in the depths below.
And night is in its hollow caves,
And men go down beneath its waves.

—MARIANNE FARNINGHAM
("The City Sea.")

✦

Prayer—Our Father in heaven, Thou hast set our lives in places where there is much to be done for Thee. In the quiet of remote homes, in the activity of village or town, or in the rush and roar of the city, we have still the consolation of Thy presence. Give strength, we beseech Thee, to those whose lives are cast amid the fret and worry of busy places. Save them from the loneliness of the solitary among the multitudes, and from the pressure of conflicting and compromising influences. And help us all to be worthy of a place in the City of God.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*The Blessing of Sleep.*

Our soul tends to take for granted those boons which life gives us in rhythmical sequence — the seasons, the light and dark, the seed-time and harvest, the day for work and the night for sleep. Because they come in regular order and are oft repeated we easily forget that God has anything to do with them. This is true particularly of the blessing of sleep, a sweet gift which we accept at the end of the toil-filled day with but scant thought that it is our Father's benediction upon our labor, and His gracious preparation of our minds and bodies for further service on another day. Even in our weariness let us not forget to thank God for the gift of rest, and in the refreshment of the morning we will find redoubled strength.

✚

Scripture—He giveth his beloved sleep.—*Psalm 127: 2.*

✚

Care-charming Sleep, thou easer of all woes,
Brother to Death, sweetly thyself dispose
On this afflicted soul; fall like a cloud
In gentle showers; give nothing that is loud
Or painful to its slumbers.

—JOHN FLETCHER
("Invocation to Sleep.")

✚

Prayer—Our gracious Lord, we thank Thee for the rest of the night. Thou art very good to us, and in Thy protection and love we find our comfort. As the day has for us its duties and blessings, so may the night bring to us the restoration of our strength for the new day. If we are sleepless, may we find refuge in Thy Word, with its glorious hopes and its counsels of grace. As our Savior found his chief satisfaction in nights of prayer, may we count all time precious, even the hours of the night, that we may spend with Thee.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*Progress Toward Perfection.*

Human nature carries within itself the sense of incompleteness. Even those whom we call sages and saints confess to a humbling awareness of their ignorance and moral limitation. We are made for growth, for progress. Each goal attained discloses other goals yet farther on. Each achievement is the beginning of a new advance. This progressive principle in life seems more natural to youth than to mature life, because it is accompanied by the more obvious fact of physical growth from childhood to man's estate. But the soul should not be deceived by the limitations of the body. In character, in vision, in wisdom and in sympathy there need be no limits short of the fulness of life which Jesus achieved.

✣

Scripture—Till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.—*Eph. 4:13.*

✣

> While man knows partly but conceives beside,
> Creeps ever on from fancies to the fact,
> And in this striving, this converting air
> Into a solid he may grasp and use,
> Finds progress, man's distinctive mark alone,
> Not God's, and not the beasts'; God is, they are,
> Man partly is and wholly hopes to be.
>
> —ROBERT BROWNING
> ("A Death in the Desert.")

✣

Prayer—Our Father, Thou art the source of our life, and toward Thee our best impulses ever take their way. Our Master has taught us that we are to be perfect, even as Thou art. Save us, we beseech Thee, from contentment with any lesser goal. May we crave that daily growth that brings us the increasing sense of attainment of holy things. We love Thee; may we love Thee more each day, till we meet Thee in a world without end.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Suffering Servants of God.*

In an age like our own, when life has been made smooth and easy by the ministries of comfort and convenience, the sufferings and hardships of the saints in other ages seem remote and legendary. Yet no life is complete that has not suffered, no culture is mature that does not come out of severe discipline. Nor must we forget that all about us — as most of us live in cloistered and protected circumstances — there are lives that are set in a circle of sorrow and are acquainted with grief. Perhaps in the long run that experience is rather to be envied than avoided. At least, if nobly borne, it brings fellowship with the great souls of all the ages, and most of all, with our divine Lord.

✚

Scripture—Oh, that I could comfort myself against sorrow! My heart is faint within me. For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt.—*Jer. 8:18, 21.*

✚

The story of a soul at strife
That learned at last to kiss the rod,
And passed through sorrow up to God
From living to a higher life.

—HENRY van DYKE
("Tennyson's In Memoriam.")

✚

Prayer—Most merciful Father, in Thee we live and move and have our being. Glorify Thyself in us. If like Thy prophets of old we are called upon to suffer for the truth, help us like them to bear with patience and courage the burden put upon us. Make Thou the plans for our lives. Aid us that we may be faithful witnesses for Thee. Then in Thy merciful kindness save us from regret, from despair and from all sense of failure. Turn us again, O Lord, and cause Thy face to shine upon us, and we shall be saved.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*The Power of the Seed.*

Wonderfully fertile are all our contacts with our fellows. Some influence goes out from us into their lives at the turning of every new aspect of our personality toward them. It is as if we carried with us a bag of seeds and were forever flinging them into the eager soil of others' lives. The sowing is inevitable. There is no moment in which seed is not scattered, even by the most careless. For good or ill, for higher or lower, toward faith or toward disillusionment, we are influencing other souls by our deeds and words, and more especially by the temper and spirit of our lives.

✣

Scripture—In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand.—*Eccl. 11:6.*

He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.—*Gal. 6:8.*

✣

Plant lilies, and lilies will bloom;
Plant roses, and roses will grow;
Plant hate, and hate to life will spring;
Plant love, and love to you will bring
The fruit of the seed you sow.

✣

Prayer—In our hands, Father of mercies, Thou hast put the seeds of good, and every day's sowing is sure to bring its harvest. Save us from carelessness in our sowing. Our words and acts, even our thoughts, are seeds potent beyond all we can think for good or evil. Reveal to us the contentment that comes with the assurance that the good seeds we sow will not fail of fruitage. May we sow the seed of the kingdom in the field of the spirit, that we may reap life eternal. We pray in Jesus' name.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Shepherd of the Sheep.*

How marvelously God fits His many-sided life into our moods and needs! He appears to our soul in varied forms — now as challenger of our strength, now as guide for our blindness, now as leader of our hopes, again as teacher of our inexperience, and yet again as partner and co-worker in our unequal tasks. In our helplessness and dependence God comes to us as tender Shepherd, throwing about us His gentle restraints, folding us with infinite comfort in His love and care, searching the hills and the wilderness if we stray away and bringing us back in His arms. With exhaustless patience and solicitude He keeps watch over us without slumber or sleep.

✚

Scripture—The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters.—*Psalm 23:1, 2.*

✚

> And I first played the tune all our sheep know, as one after one
> So docile they come to the pen-door till folding be done,
> They are white and untorn by the bushes, for lo, they have fed
> Where the long grasses stifle the water within the stream's bed.
>
> —ROBERT BROWNING ("Saul.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, Thou art the great Shepherd, and we are the sheep of Thy pasture. Lead us, we beseech Thee, in green pastures and beside still waters. On this holy day we praise Thee for the food on which our souls are fed. Help us to abide in Thy care and to wander no more. We were as those who go astray, but now we would return to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. Deliver us from the betrayer, guide us in the way we take, and bring us at last to Thine upper fold in safety. For Thy name's sake.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*The Trumpet Call.*

We are evermore coming upon crises which call upon all that is heroic within us to make a firm stand for duty or justice or truth. Life is not always and continuously heroic, for the course of duty leads most of us into the less thrilling round of common tasks. But to each of us in his sphere there come stressful and critical moments when our soul is called upon to make a radical decision and a supreme consecration. This call may issue from within our circumstances, or it may be interpreted through the counsels of a friend or a leader, or it may be some new accent that we have caught in the voice of our Lord. Whatever its source, it is God's call for us to play the man.

✚

Scripture—Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men; be strong.—*I Cor. 16:13.*

✚

O, for a trumpet call to stir the throng
Of doubtful fighting men whose eyes and ears
Watch till a banner in the east appears
And the skies ring that have been still so long!

—F. W. H. MYERS
("A Child of the Age.")

✚

Prayer—Gracious God, Thou hast summoned us to a great campaign against the power of darkness in the world. Too often we grow weary or discouraged, and lose the ground we ought to hold. Save us, our Father, from the shame and sin of defeat, and may we find such assurance in Thy help, and such return of valor in Thy call to duty, that we shall win the fight. May the grace of God be with us.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*The Great Refusal.*

Among those whom Jesus met there was one who proved a disappointment to our Lord because he turned away unpersuaded from a great opportunity. We also, like that rich young ruler, grieve our Master more by our refusals to do the noble thing than by our positive violations of God's law. This shows us another side of sin — the side of omission, whereon most of our guilt lies. With what sorrow must time and history and God view such refusals! Our hesitance to answer the supreme opportunity with a supreme consecration is no less fatal to our soul than is gross sin. Only in the final audit of character shall we know what losses we have sustained through disobedience to our heavenly visions.

✚

Scripture—And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest; go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. But his countenance fell at the saying, and he went away sorrowful: for he was one that had great possessions.—*Mark 10:21, 22.*

✚

After I had recognized some amongst them,
I saw and knew the shadow of him
Who from cowardice made the great refusal.

—DANTE ALIGHIERI ("Inferno.")

✚

Prayer—Father of Mercies, the gifts of Thy hand have made us rich. We are amazed at Thy goodness to us. Save us, we beseech Thee, from the tragedy of making the blessings Thou hast given us the means of our own undoing. Keep us from selfishness, from cowardice, and from the ungenerous heart. Deliver us from hesitance in the presence of opportunity, and from slackness in Thy service. For Jesus' sake.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*Nature's Message Concerning God.*

God speaks in many voices through the ministries of nature. The marvelous tints of the changing year, the varying lights of day and night, the altered moods of storm and calm, the grades of warmth and chill in the revolving seasons, the many sounds of animate life, all are ways in which the life of God discloses itself to our soul. To read His world with responsive heart is like a fresh revelation of His Word.

✚

Scripture—The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.—*Psalm 33:5.*

Consider the lilies, how they grow.—*Matt. 6:28.*

Let the earth hear and the fulness thereof, the world and all things that come forth of it.—*Isa. 34:1.*

✚

In holy moments, when great nature seems
Hushed and a-listen, earth and air and sky
In all their loneliness aroused from dreams,
Ready for revelations from on high;

We mortals, too, await in wonder then,
Hearts throbbing like some small, just-captured bird,
Something divine about-to-be, ah, when
Or where we know not, but we trust the Word.

—RICHARD BURTON ("Nature's Word.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, whose dwelling place is eternity, we are made to wonder at the disclosures of Thy loving kindness to all the creatures of Thy hand. All nature is full of Thy majesty, and daily Thy praise is sung by the heavens and the earth. May we not be unmindful of this great message concerning Thee, but then rather try to discern the meaning of the voices of earth and sky, that we may know for ourselves the secret of God. Make thy word sure to us, that we may trust in Thy mercy and be filled with Thy life. For we ask in Jesus' name.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*Courage for Today.*

We cannot hope to win in our day's work or in our battle with temptation except as we go forth with a brave heart. To be timid is to be defeated in advance. Yet we must not confuse courage with mere self-assurance. Humility and the sense of dependence upon divine help are not sources of weakness but of strength. The secret of victory is to cast all our fear and care upon God and let His might be our shield and weapon against whatever evil awaits us in the day.

✚

Scripture—Be strong, and of a good courage; be not affrighted, neither be thou dismayed; for Jehovah thy God is with thee.—*Josh. 1:9.*

✚

Be strong!
We are not here to play, to dream, to drift,
We have hard work to do, and loads to lift.
Shun not the struggle, face it, 'tis God's gift.
Be strong!

—MALTBIE D. BABCOCK ("Be Strong.")

✚

Prayer—Gracious God, we confess to Thee our faintheartedness and our unbelief. We have not yet fully learned to trust Thee, nor to have confidence in ourselves. We have too often fainted before our foes. Help us to face this day's temptations and duties in Thy strength. Let not the power of the enemy cast us down. Suffer us not to grow weary or discouraged. In Thy might help us to be strong. And this we plead in the name of the Savior who died for us. —*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Comfort of Nature.*

In the hurry and fret of our lives, which seem so brief, and yet might be made so timeless, it is always a solace to take our way into the solitude of nature, where many voices speak comfortingly and inspiringly to our soul. Such communion with the spirit of the world imparts to us a sense of the quiet and unhastened movement of the centuries, some appreciation of the joy of God, the divine Artist, in the work of His hands, and the power of the silence and majesty of forest and mountain and sea to heal the wounds of our worried and baffled lives.

✚

Scripture—The trees of Jehovah are filled with moisture; the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted; where the birds make their nests: O Jehovah, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches.—*Psalm 104:16,17; 24.*

✚

If thou art worn and hard beset
With sorrows that thou wouldst forget,
If thou wouldst read a lesson that will keep
Thy heart from fainting and thy soul from sleep,
Go to the woods and hills. No tears
Dim the sweet look that Nature wears.

—HENRY W. LONGFELLOW
("Sunrise on the Hill.")

✚

Prayer—Loving Father, we thank Thee for this fair world in which we live. Thou hast made it very beautiful for us, and the springtime makes us glad with a new joy in all the works of Thy hands. Help us to find the satisfaction that Nature can give us. From the struggle of the day and the turmoil of the world, we take refuge in Thee, and seek time to learn the secret of quietness and peace that Thou canst teach us in the calm solitudes of hill and forest and field, where also our Savior loved to be.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*The Light that Shines.*

Goodness and truth are always positive and aggressive. They cease to exist if they are treated as secret treasures to be kept hidden away in the soul's inner life. Goodness ceases to be good if it is made to exist for itself, and truth passes into falsehood unless it be shared with other minds. Our virtues are like light, whose nature it is to fling itself abroad and serve all who come into the range of its beams. This kind of unselfishness is, in reality, a larger selfishness, for by sharing our lives positively with others our own soul, our self, grows in strength and joy.

✚

Scripture—Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candle-stick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men.—*Matt. 5:15,16.*

✚

> Heaven doth with us as we with torches do,
> Not light them for themselves: for if our virtues
> Did not go forth of us, 'twere all alike as if
> We had them not.
>
> —WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
> ("Measure for Measure.")

✚

Prayer—Good Father, we thank Thee for the light Thou hast sent us in the open day and in the gospel of our Lord. May we also learn the secret of the light that cannot be dimmed. Deliver us from darkness and the love of things that lurk in darkened ways. May our light, however feeble, shine forth as Thou wouldst have it. And may the true Light, that lighteth every man that cometh into the world, lead us safely home.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Divine Guest Rejected.*

It is one of the tragedies of this confused and wilful world that the only life ever lived here which completely realized the ideals of our humanity should have been treated with scant courtesy and counted a stranger. Yet one cannot avoid asking whether our Lord would be otherwise received today if he should come again in the flesh. Would my soul acclaim him, and accord him hospitality, or would he find it preoccupied with things so alien to his ideals that he could not abide with me?

✚

Scripture—He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become sons of God. —*John 1:11, 12.*

✚

To One alone my thoughts arise,
The Eternal Truth, the Good and Wise,
To Him I cry,
Who shared on earth our common lot,
But the world comprehended not
His deity.

—HENRY W. LONGFELLOW
("Coplas de Manrique.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we bless Thee for the life of Christ, our friend and teacher, who walked the ways of life with us to show us how rich and how beautiful our lives can be. Save us from being of the wicked who receive him not, but rather may his companionship be our supreme desire. We thank Thee for this good day, made memorable once by the conquest of death, and evermore by the observance of Thy church through the ages. May we enter the sanctuary today with the joy of those who have received the right to become the sons of God. And may our souls respond to Thy call to the higher life of faith and trust. —*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*Gratefulness for Our Teachers.*

Life brings us many teachers, some unwitting and unaware that we are learning from them, others whose conscious task it is to guide inexperience into the way of wisdom. To our first teachers, our parents, our debt of gratitude is incalculable. Our other teachers, the instructors of our childhood and youth, are held ever in most grateful remembrance. To none of them can we make adequate compensation for the deposits of good wherewith they have enriched us. The best we can do is to pass on the dower of their lives to those we teach, to our children and to all within the circle of our influence.

✚

Scripture—I will teach you the good way, and the right way.—*1 Sam. 12:23.*

Ye have need that one teach you.—*Heb. 5:12.*

Yet shall not thy teachers be removed any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers.—*Isa. 30:20.*

✚

For rigorous teachers seized my youth,
And purged its faith, and trimm'd its fire,
Show'd me the high, white star of Truth,
There bade me gaze, and there aspire.

—MATTHEW ARNOLD ("Youth.")

✚

Prayer—O Lord, our great Teacher and Guide, we are as little children before Thee. We would open our hearts as obedient and eager pupils in Thy great school. We thank Thee for the measureless contribution made to our lives by our teachers, whose names we hold ever in grateful recollection. Bless us when we try to teach those who are committed to us for instruction. Give to all who have to do with childhood the sense of its sacredness and value, and bring us all into the higher School of the Eternal Life. For Christ's sake.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*The Great Teacher.*

Whether in strenuous activity or in leisurely communion with his friends, Jesus was unceasingly the teacher of men. It was not with armed followers that he sought to change the face of the world, but by the spoken message of good will. In this he has made clear the way of all progress toward the ideal. Only as men understand can they make progress. It is truth that makes men free, and all teaching of the truth is of God.

✚

Scripture—Jesus went out of the house and sat by the seaside. And there were gathered unto him great multitudes, so that he entered into a boat and sat; and all the multitude stood on the beach. And he taught them many things.—*Matt. 13:1, 2.*

✚

On a rock,
With the broad moonlight falling on his brow,
He stood and taught the people. At his feet
Lay his small scrip, and pilgrim's shallop-shell
And staff, for they had waited by the sea
Till he came o'er from Gadarene, and prayed
For his wont teachings as he came to land.

—NATHANIEL PARKER WILLIS
("The Daughter of Jairus.")

✚

Prayer—Merciful God, we adore Thee for Thy abounding love. Thou hast sent to us the great Teacher, in whose words we have found all wisdom and power. Save us, we beseech Thee, from the sin of slighting his message. May we give ear to his story of eternal life, even as those who first heard him by the sea. And with the desire to hear may there also be born within us the will to understand and follow him. Good Father, grant us the humble heart and the obedient spirit, and may the Master find us among his own in the day of the home-coming above.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*The Holy City.*

Our hopes for building our uncouth world into a fair social order of justice and brotherhood rest at last upon our faith that God Himself is our great Co-worker at this mighty enterprise. To one who tarried in a time of sore distress upon a lonely island in the waste of the sea, there came a vision of a city builded in the skies and let down to abide forever on the earth. This vision was simply God's way of saying to him and to us that the Holy City toward which our blundering human efforts tend, is already a reality in the mind of God, and that its realization upon the earth is not alone the result of our toil but of God's partnership with us.

✚

Scripture—And he carried me away to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.—*Rev. 21:10, 11.*

✚

Give us, O God, the strength to build
The city that hath stood
Too long a dream, whose laws are love,
Whose ways are brotherhood,
And where the sun that shineth is
God's grace for human good.

—W. RUSSELL BOWIE
("The Coming City.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we thank Thee for the City which hath foundations, Jerusalem above, which is free, and which is the Mother of us all. In the visions of faith we may see its glories, and rest our weary souls in the contemplation of its beauty. For its fair and spacious life we long, not as some far-off goal of after days, but as an ideal toward which it is our privilege and duty to strive. Help us, O Father, to believe more confidently in that city that is to be, that comes down out of heaven from Thyself to us, as we give it place and room, and make ready for its coming. Then shall come our true and lasting joy.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*The Pillar of Cloud and Fire.*

The soul's eternal cry is for the God who can give it direction and guidance. We do not know the way we take. Life has too many options to permit us complete confidence in our choice of a path. If we could see a visible token of God's presence it would hearten us. We should then have no doubt of our course. But may not the ancient pillar of flame and cloud be after all a symbol of just as real divine leadership? To those who have eyes to see His sign, God's presence is just as clear as of old.

✚

Scripture—And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light.—*Ex. 13: 21.*

✚

When Israel, of the Lord beloved,
Out from the land of bondage came,
Her father's God before her moved,
An awful guide in smoke and flame.
By day, along the astonished lands,
The clouded pillar glided slow;
By night Arabia's crimson sands
Returned the fiery column's glow.

—SIR WALTER SCOTT ("Ivanhoe.")

✚

Prayer—O Thou who leadest Thy people through all the ways of life, we thank Thee for the record of Thy gracious leadings of old. With strength of hand and with an outstretched arm Thou didst bring Israel into a land of Thine own choosing. So, Father, bring us out of our bondage to sin, and by the later and truer pillar of cloud and fire, the clear tokens of Thy presence, make us to discern Thee and know the safety of the way we take. Thou hast been our fathers' God; forsake not us, their children. And may our journey through the wilderness lead at last to the highlands of God.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Preciousness of Youth.*

Youth is the golden time for the soul to turn to God. Our heavenly Father accepts us at any time of life, but it is easier for us to turn to Him and learn to love Him in the plastic years of youth than afterward. Life is all too short at best, and our Creator should not be robbed of a single year of the life He has graciously given us.

✚

Scripture—Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them. —*Eccl. 12:1.*

✚

Before I taught my tongue to wound
My conscience with a sinful sound,
Or had the black art to dispense,
A several sin to every sense,
But felt through all this earthly dress
Bright shoots of everlastingness.

—HENRY VAUGHAN ("The Retreat.")

✚

Prayer—Father of mercies, we would learn the secret of Thy power and mercy in our early years, in order that our later lives may be spent with Thee. And we would know the blessedness of leading all those of whom we have the oversight into such knowledge of Thyself that in youth they may commit their ways unto the Lord, and enter into the covenants of His grace.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*Things that Pass.*

Life is only worth while as it accumulates experience and enduring possession. So much of what we eagerly seek is either missed entirely, or, once gained, has to be given up almost in the getting, that many lives are mere tragedies of futility. But we have been assured by those who have passed this way, and most of all by One whose word cannot fail, that there are treasures of love and character which cannot be lost. For these treasures of the spirit we can well afford to exchange all else that we may possess them.

✝

Scripture—For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world; and the world passeth away. —*1 John. 2:16, 17.*

✝

The worldly hope men set their hearts upon
Turns ashes—or it prospers; and anon,
Like snow upon the desert's dusty face,
Lighting a little hour or two—is gone.

—OMAR KHAYYAM ("The Rubaiyat.")

✝

Prayer—O Thou unchanging Friend, teach us the lesson that much of what we see and desire can only satisfy us for a brief time, for it will not last. Save us from the mistake of giving our best affection and effort to that which cannot endure the testing of time. Our lives are in Thy keeping, gracious God, and may we be content to leave them in Thy care, lest they be wasted in unprofitable ventures. We close this week with prayer to Thee for wisdom and comfort. So may all our times be in Thy hand, till time melts into eternity.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Good Will.*

Fundamental to all other grounds of happiness is the sincere desire for other people's happiness. It is easy to become discontented by nursing the foolish delusion that there is not enough happiness in the world for all, and that, therefore, one must grasp his happiness at the expense of his neighbors. But this is folly and misery and constriction of soul. Underlying all enduring satisfaction and joy there must be a large and genuine wish for the welfare of others. By this good-will our own happiness is enriched, for in the happiness of others our own soul will then have its share.

✚

Scripture—See that none render unto any evil for evil; but always follow after that which is good, one toward another, and toward all. Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks.—*1 Thess. 5:15-18.*

✚

He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God, who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.

—SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE
("The Ancient Mariner.")

✚

Prayer—Inspirer and Hearer of prayer, Thou Shepherd and Guardian of Thy people, we rejoice in the glory of this new day of rest and worship. Safely through another week Thou hast brought us on our way. May our prayers rise like incense to Thee, and find access to the ear of Him who never slumbers nor sleeps. Most of all, may our lives so manifest the love that knows no evil, that our prayers shall be no mere form of words, but the expression of souls in love with Thee and intent on helping all the world. Grant us a day such as shall send us forth strong for the duties of the coming week. For Jesus' sake.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*The Certain Doom of Evil.*

Our Lord's confidence in truth and in right showed its obverse side in his conviction of the unescapable doom of all error and wrong. He saw clearly that the evil spirit within the human heart and within the world, the Satan, both of fact and figure, is to be cast down from his place of power. The long struggle toward better things, hindered of the selfish heart and thwarted by the malice of the sinful, is to hate its goal and realization in a better age, toward which all the generations have looked with eager eyes. To link our lives by faith and purpose with this hope is to be in league with destiny.

✚

Scripture—And he said unto them, I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven.—*Luke 10:18.*

And he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and bound him.—*Rev. 20:2.*

✚

Him the Almighty Power
Hurled headlong flaming from the ethereal sky,
With hideous ruin and combustion, down
To bottomless perdition; there to dwell
In adamantine chains and penal fire,
Who durst defy the Omnipotent to arms.

—JOHN MILTON ("Paradise Lost.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we rejoice in the knowledge that Thy will is at last to prevail in all the world. To Thee every knee shall bow one day, and every tongue confess Thy glory. To that time we look forward with expectancy and joy, for then all Thy foes shall meet defeat, and the kingdoms of this world shall become Thine own. May the knowledge of this good day to come dispel our doubt and hesitation, and arm us with courage for the daily contest with evil. Cheer us with Thy presence as we journey toward the end of the way. For Christ's sake.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*Longing for the Heavenly Rest.*

It is not because this present life is dull or burdensome or unfruitful that our hearts so often meditate upon the heavenly life, but because that life is so truly a part of ourselves. We are creatures of two worlds, and while we find inspirations and satisfactions here, we know that we are made for even fuller and richer life than this world affords. Therefore, in the midst of our most zestful activities there steal into our hearts hints and dreams of the life that is life indeed.

✚

Scripture—I would not live alway.—*Job 7:16.*

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. . . .having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for it is very far better.—*Phil. 1: 21, 23.*

✚

Who would wish back the Saints upon our rough
Wearisome road?
Wish back a breathless soul
Just at the goal?
My soul, praise God
For all dear souls which have enough.

—CHRISTINA ROSSETTI
("Heavenly Homesickness.")

✚

Prayer—Loving Father, we give Thee praise for the glorious hopes that inspire our hearts. We are happy in our daily work and in the love of our homes and friends. But better than all, we look forward with eagerness to the rest and the service of our "house not made with hands." As time goes on it grows dearer to us, for those we love leave our side and enter into the true life. We would not call them back. They will not return to us, but we shall go to them. It is this confidence in which we labor and wait, for Thou wilt bring us to our own in the aftertime.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*Glory and the Grave.*

Our soul is not really brave unless it can face the facts of life in the revealing light that death throws upon them. For death is a fact, a fact which we observe all about us, and a fact which each one of us must some day experience. Without the slightest taint of morbidness or alarm or false piety it is profitable for us to stand apart from life now and then, and assess its values as we shall assess them some day when we meet death face to face. From such a point of view much that is now important would seem negligible, while many things we are now neglecting would take on urgent and eternal values.

✚

Scripture—At rest with kings and counsellors of the earth, which built solitary piles for themselves, or with princes that had gold,...the small and the great are there. —*Job 3:14-19.*

✚

Here are sands, ignoble things
Dropped from the ruined sides of kings;
Here's a world of pomp and state,
Buried in dust, once dead by fate.

—FRANCIS BEAUMONT
("Lines on the Tombs in Westminster.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, whose providence supplies our needs, we thank Thee that life is made rich not by what we have but by what we are. When we realize how little joy there would be in a life full of luxury but empty of holy purpose and Christlike living, we thank Thee afresh for the limitations in which we are placed, and the simplicity to which we are kept. Teach us the art of right living, so that we shall be above envy, distrust, worry and fretfulness; and so prepare us for the better life that is to be.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*Down to the Sea.*

With all the progress science has made in sea-travel there is still a particular tremulousness of heart with which we regard the thought of any who are dear to us sailing on the great deep. When we pray for our soldiers of the sea, or the great multitude of workers who must needs cross the waters in the pursuit of their duty, or our dear ones who may be making passage, we do well to remember that the sea is God's as well as the land, and that He hears us when we ask His protection against the violence of wind and wave.

✚

Scripture—They that go down to the sea in ships, these see the works of the Lord. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still; then are they glad because they are quiet; so he bringeth them to the heaven of their desire.—*Psalm 107: 23, 24, 29, 30.*

✚

God guides across the trackless sea
The children of his love;
The wild winds gather round the ships,
The clouds are dark above,
But he keeps watch through all the night
And they are safe as in the light.

—MARIANNE FARNINGHAM
("He Bringeth Them.")

✚

Prayer—Ruler of Nature, Thou God of power, we thank Thee that sea and land are alike in Thy keeping. The call of life takes some of those we love into distant waters, and we tremble at the passing winds lest they should bring them harm. But Thou, O Father, art the Master of the storms. The sea is Thine, and Thou hast made it. Calm the violence of all rough waters where our fellow-men fare forth, and bring all souls in safety to their journey's end. So will we praise Thee for Thy mercy evermore. For Jesus' sake.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*Domestic Love.*

We do not enter fully into the satisfactions afforded by our homes until we have learned to carry our love relationships up to God for His blessing. In the sunlight of His presence the love of husband and wife, of parent and child, blooms into a beauty and strength that natural impulse or mere secular circumstance cannot supply. Whatever else our homes must lack, let us make sure that they make room for the abiding presence of Him whose name is love.

✚

Scripture—Therefore doth a man leave his father and his mother and cleave unto his wife; and they become one flesh.—*Gen. 2:24.*

✚

> Yet in the long years liker must they grow;
> The man be more of woman, she of man;
> He gain in sweetness and in moral height,
> Nor lose the wrestling thews that throw the world;
> She mental breadth, nor part in childward care,
> Nor lose the childlike in the larger mind;
> Till at the last she set herself to man
> Like perfect music unto noble words.
>
> —ALFRED TENNYSON
> ("The Princess.")

✚

Prayer—Dear Father, we owe Thee our unfailing praise for the loving provisions Thou hast made for our happiness. Thou settest the solitary in families, and teachest Thy children to honor domestic love, to choose with discretion and forethought those with whom life is to be spent, and to set up the altar of worship in the new-made home. Protect and bless our households, we beseech Thee. May husbands and wives live together in love and fidelity; may children answer to the summons of love, and grow to strength and beauty in the atmosphere of homes where Christ abides. Thus fit us all for the fellowship of the blameless Family above. Through Christ our Lord.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*The Touch of Healing.*

In our human degree it is possible for us to possess the power to heal the afflicted that our Lord, in his divine degree, so marvelously possessed. Upon that secret source whence came his unique endowment we too may draw, and by our calm strength, our hopefulness, our faith and our radiance of spirit we may spread help and courage and health to all who touch our lives. And we shall do this best not by any professional or conscious activity, but by the unconscious influences that radiate from a personality which we daily strive to fashion in the likeness of his character.

✚

Scripture—And behold, a woman which had an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the border of his garment; for she said within herself, If I do but touch his garment, I shall be made whole. —*Matt. 9:20, 21.*

✚

The healing of his seamless dress
Is by our beds of pain.
We touch him in life's throng and press,
And we are whole again.

—JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER
("Our Master.")

✚

Prayer—Father of help and of mercy, we contemplate with joy our Savior's ministry of healing and friendliness among the poor and afflicted of old. We would learn the lesson of his life. And though we have not his mysterious and convincing power, yet we have our own, and can do much in his name. We would not shut up his works of mercy to the distant past, but seek to diffuse his spirit of sympathy and good will, which is better than medicines, and may often work even the return of health. Endow us with his spirit of love, his touch of helpfulness, and his yearning for kindly activity.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*Departing Guests.*

In all our deeper moods our thoughts turn as by instinct to the friends of other days whose lives we shared but who are with us no more. We think of the courage they would give us for our present task, of the joy they would feel in our present joy, of the satisfaction we would take if they were walking by our side at the present stage of our journey. And yet they have only gone a little way ahead, and there remains to gladden our hearts the sure hope of reunion with them in the larger life into which they have gone.

✚

Scripture—To depart and be with Christ, which is far better.—*Phil. 1:23.*

✚

Be with me, Lord! My house is growing still
As one by one the guests go out the door;
And some, who helped me once to do thy will,
Behold and praise thee on the heavenly shore.

—T. C. WILLIAMS ("Departure.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we accept this good day as Thy loving gift to us. It is the memorial of our Savior's victory over death. It cheers with the confident assurance that those who go out from our fellowship along the dim ways of death are not departed forever, but have only gone a little earlier than we into the Father's house. May our worship today be gladdened by this thought as we miss the friends who once sat with us in the sanctuary. And may we meet them all again in the better home.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*God's Standard and Man's.*

There is both sternness and tenderness in the thought that the ultimate verdict on our lives is to be given by a righteous God and not by man. We may pass favorable examination at the hands of society and be accounted respectable, but behind the fair exterior that men observe God sees our character and knows what we really are. On the other hand, men have no just means of making allowances for seeming faults and errors, and ofttimes their condemnation rests harshly on the innocent. But the Father knows our nature and our circumstances, our earnest strivings and our motives, and His judgment is both just and gracious.

✚

Scripture—Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; for God seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart.—*1 Sam. 16:7.*

✚

Through all disguise, form, place, or name,
Beneath the Flaunting robes of sin,
Through poverty and squalid shame,
Thou lookest on the man within.

—JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER
("Democracy.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we give Thee thanks for the gifts of life. Not only do we require the blessings Thou sendest us from day to day, but much more we need Thyself, the source of life and happiness. We need Thy spirit, that we may see things as Thou seest them, not with the partial and imperfect vision of the flesh. And may we tremble, yet grow happy, at the thought that Thou knowest us completely, and art acquainted with all our ways. Save us from contentment with the second best things of life, and so fit us for eternity.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*The Gift of Peace.*

Amid the anxieties and tensions of life it is possible for us to move with inner calmness and confidence, if we have learned Christ's secret. He frees us from the tyranny of circumstances, and shows us how we may control our environment for our higher good. Thus He gives an inner peace which the world cannot give.

✣

Scripture—Because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the dayspring from on high shall visit us. To shine upon them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death; to guide our feet into the way of peace.—*Luke 1:78, 79.*

✣

There is a peace which no men know
Save those whom suffering hath laid low,—
The peace of pain.

A strength, which only comes to those
Who've borne defeat,—greater, God knows,
Than victory.

A happiness which comes at last,
After all happiness seems past,—
The joy of peace.

✣

Prayer—Good Father, we adore Thee for the gifts which enrich our lives. In the contemplation of all Thou sendest us our troubles seem as the fine dust of the balance. Yet we thank Thee even for the hardships that have befallen us and the defeats that seemed at first to crush us. Thou art teaching us that it is not success alone that gives life worth, but that the finer flowers of character blossom in the pathway of failure and defeat. Grant us, we beseech Thee, through our adversities a richer culture of soul, and may we rise to the joy of Thy companionship, in which alone true peace is found.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*In the Hour of Trial.*

If we have any faith at all it is not so difficult to believe in God's justice and fatherly care when our lot is comfortable and our affairs go on smoothly. But the test of our faith comes in the actual experience of some reversal of fortune or some obstruction of our purposes. Yet it is just in the hour when circumstances are untoward that faith comes to its finest fruitage. If we could learn the master art of giving way to God's will in the hour of our trial, He would fashion for us a blessing which, without such an experience, we could neither receive nor comprehend.

✚

Scripture—I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it. Remove thy stroke away from me; I am consumed by the blow of thy hand.—*Psalm 39:9, 10.*

✚

O teach me in the trying hour,
When anguish swells the drying tear,
To still my sorrows, own thy power,
Thy goodness love, thy justice fear.

—THOMAS CHATTERTON ("Faith.")

✚

Prayer—Divine Father, we seek Thy comforting presence in times when all earthly help seems nothing worth. In such hours we learn how much Thou canst mean to us, and how Thy grace can sustain our souls. Like the psalmist of old, we can find consolation even in sorrow if we can feel that Thou art not far off, and that Thou art aiding us to find the light. Thy love is more than ever manifest in our days of affliction, and Thou waitest only to do us good when we are ready to accept Thine aid. Comfort us by the clear shining of Thy mercy, and give us rest in the aftertime. For Jesus' sake.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*Too Late!*

We carry within our hearts a guilty sense of being unprepared for the critical moments of our experience. We have let our thoughts dally with foolish or sinful things, while we said to ourselves, There is time enough yet. Again and again in the course of life we have been shut out from the best things because we were unready.

✚

Scripture—But at midnight there is a cry, Behold, the bridegroom! Come ye forth to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are going out. And while they went away to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage feast; and the door was shut.
—*Matt. 25:6, 7, 8, 10.*

✚

> No light had we; for that we do repent;
> And learning this, the bridegroom will relent,
> Too late, too late! Ye cannot enter now.
>
> —ALFRED TENNYSON ("Guinevere.")

✚

Prayer—Merciful God, Thou art a just and loving Father, and we bow before Thee with deep reverence and daily thanks. Teach us the need of constant attention to the high obligations of Thy will. Thou hast called us into Thy service, and our greatest peril is that we may slight our duty of love and loyalty, and fail of Thy approval. Save us, we beseech Thee, from the sin of neglecting the means of true culture and usefulness. May we escape the fate of those who too late discover that the summer is past, the harvest is ended, and their work not even well begun. For Christ's sake.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Wages of Sin.*

Our sin, we know, is a harsh taskmaster. It lures us with fair promises into its service. But having once gained the consent of our will, it enslaves us and pays us at last in the bitter coin of death.

✚

Scripture—For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. —*Rom. 6:23.*

✚

Another blow has fallen, Lord —
    Was it from Thee?
Is it indeed Thy fiery sword
That cuts our hearts? We know Thy word;
We know by heart wherein it saith,
    "Whom the Lord loves He chasteneth"—
But also, in another breath,
This: "The wages of sin is death."

—CHARLOTTE PERKINS STETSON ("Death.")

✚

Prayer—Father of mercy and love, we thank Thee for the words of life and love which fell from the lips of our Master in the days of his flesh. But not less are we grateful for his words of warning against the supreme dangers of sin and stubbornness that so often make ungracious and questionable the lives we live. Thy love is as truly manifested in Thy chastisements of evil as in Thy approval of good. Deliver us, we pray, from deception of ourselves regarding our true standing with Thee, and make us responsive to the call of the Holy Spirit. For Thy name's sake.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*The Heavenly Ladder.*

On the far hillside of Palestine the patriarch saw uplifted in his dream a shining stairway to the sky. To the thought of his day the heaven was closed, save when some celestial visitant dazzled the beholder's eyes. But Jesus has made open way to the throne of God. To a disciple he said, You shall see the heavens ever open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. And this word has been proved true in Christian experience ever since. By faith in him we build our way of ascent to the City of God.

✣

Scripture—Behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And behold the Lord stood above it.—*Gen. 28:12, 13.*

✣

Heaven is not reached in a single bound,
But we build the ladder by which we rise
From the lowly earth to the vaulted skies;
And we mount to its summit round by round.

—JOSIAH G. HOLLAND ("Gradatim.")

✣

Prayer—Our Father, we have sinned against Thee. We deserve as little as Jacob of old to have the heavens opened before us. We are not worthy that any ladder of light should be reared from our side to the feet of God. Yet all this Thou hast done, and for us the way is opened into the holiest. May we take the way so provided through Jesus Christ our Lord, and come home to Thee. May heaven seem near to us, and our efforts to attain it ever more successful, till we enter through the gates into the city.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Unknown God.*

While we are enjoying the worship of God today in the rich knowledge of His nature which Christ has given us, it is well for us to be reminded of the primitive days of Christian history when the world, though idolatrous, was nevertheless blindly groping after the true God. But for the work of men like Paul we, too, would be still worshipping the unknown God.

✚

Scripture—Ye men of Athens, in all things I perceive that ye are very religious. For as I passed along, and observed the objects of your worship I found also an altar with this inscription, To an Unknown God. What therefore ye worship unknowingly, this I set forth unto you. —*Acts 17: 22, 23.*

✚

Ay and ere now above the shining city,
Full of all knowledge and a God unknown,
Stood I and spake, and passion of my pity
Drew him from heaven and showed him to his own.

—F. W. H. MYERS ("St. Paul.")

✚

Prayer—Father in heaven, we praise Thee for the witness borne to the truth by Thy servants in the past. Our hearts are stirred as we recall the fearless and inspiring labors of apostles and saints in behalf of the gospel of our Lord. We thank Thee that today the story is preached in all the lands, and that the nations are lifting up their eyes and hands to Thee. Make the services of Thy house a comfort to our souls and a message of warning and hope to all who hear. And may our love for Thy sanctuary, the place where Thine honor dwelleth, make the day a blessing to us, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*Delight in Nature.*

The marvelous adaptations of the physical world to man's use and pleasure make it reasonable to believe that throughout the long ages of His creative activity God had man in view, and that all the earlier works of His creation were preparatory to the appearance of man who was to bear the Creator's own image. We honor and please God, therefore, by our natural delight and joy in the beauties and wonders of the world which He created and furnished as our home.

✚

Scripture—Jehovah possessed me when he marked out the foundations of the earth: then I was by him...and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him, rejoicing in his habitable earth; and my delight was with the sons of men. —*Prov. 8:29, 30, 31.*

✚

> The earth is all before me. With a heart
> Joyous, nor scared at its own liberty,
> I look about; and should the chosen guide
> Be nothing better than a wandering cloud,
> I cannot miss my way.
>
> —WILLIAM WORDSWORTH
> ("The Prelude.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we are like little children who know not anything until we are instructed by Thee. Thou hast sent us many teachers. Nature, the seasons, the living things about us, and the voices of the past, all speak of Thee. We love the good and glorious world in which Thou hast set us. In it Thou hast shown us the wonders of Thy creative power, and Thine own love of beauty. In the joy that comes from such reminders, we seek to make ourselves more worthy of Thy gifts and of Thy presence day by day.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*The Heroism of Standing Unmoved.* Souls that have in them the essentials of moral greatness always enlarge their stature and increase their powers of resistance when confronted by unexpected danger or temptation. Lesser souls fly into panic or hysteria under similar stress. We do well to bear in mind that such heroism is not summoned on the spur of the moment, but is the result of quiet and habitual fidelity in the long, steady routine of life's duties.

✚

Scripture—For in your faith ye stand fast. —*2 Cor. 1:24.*

Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit ye like men, be strong.—*1 Cor. 16:13.*

✚

O power to do, O baffled will,
O prayer and action! Ye are one.
Who may not strive may yet fulfill
The harder task of standing still,
And good but wished with God is done.

—JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER
("The Waiting.")

✚

Prayer—Dear Father of our spirits, this day renews our debt of gratitude to Thee. May the mercies Thou sendest us make us more than ever thoughtful of Thy purpose for us, and eager to bear such fruit in character and conduct as shall meet Thy approval. We would not evade any duty. We would be faithful to every trust. May our courage rise in the presence of danger, and at the thought of Thy assistance. Hold us at our post of duty, we beseech Thee, with unwavering courage, and give us the victory at last, for Jesus' sake.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*The Arrival of Spring.*

Our spiritual mood rightly responds to the suggestions of nature, and the coming of Spring awakens in our hearts responses not unlike those with which the earth herself greets the fresh new season. Instinctively we feel that we may now begin life anew, that we may clear the ground of our inner life and plant new hopes and plans and purposes there.

✚

Scripture—For, lo, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time for the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in the land.—*Song of Songs 2:11, 12.*

✚

Gentle Spring! in sunshine clad,
Well dost thou thy power display!
For winter maketh the light heart sad,
And thou, thou makest the sad heart gay.
He sees thee, and calls to his gloomy train—
The sleet, and the snow, and the wind, and the rain;
And they shrink away, and they flee in fear;
When thy merry step draws near.

—HENRY W. LONGFELLOW
("Spring.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we are increasingly grateful for Thy gifts. Thou hast sent us the springtime with its flowers and singing birds. Thou hast given us the companionship of those whose souls are knit with ours, and whose love is the joy of every day. In these mercies of Thine, the loveliness of nature, and the happiness of our homes, may we not forget Thee, but learn a deeper sense of obligation and praise. May this day remind us of all our wealth of possession, and may it increase our gratitude and devotion. For Christ's sake.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*Denial and Regret.*

Our wrong-doing grieves the heart of our Lord—that is the thought that should open up in our soul the fountains of deep sorrow and repentance. If our sin were but the violation of formal law, or if we had no knowledge of a personal God manifested in Christ, who is grieved by our sin, we might, perhaps, find sufficient motives for a change of conduct. But we should not be stirred in the depths of our nature with a cleansing passion that leads to a new birth of the soul.

✚

Scripture—Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I knew not the man.—*Matt. 26:69, 70.*

✚

Peter and James and John,
The sad tale runneth on—
By the priests' fagot hot,
I said I knew Thee not.

The little maid spake out:
"With Him thou wentest about."
"This man I never met—"
I hear the cock crow yet.

—LIZETTE WOODWORTH REESE
("Good Friday.")

✚

Prayer—Holy Father, our days are ever shadowed by our sense of sin. We have left undone the things we ought to have done, and we have done the things we ought not, and we are ashamed of our ill-desert. We cannot undo the past, but in deep and sincere repentance we can find the solace of Thy grace and set our lives in new pathways. Thus shall we find the joy of forgiveness. Forgive our sins, we pray Thee, even as we forgive those who have wronged us.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*Our Love of Christ.*

Our personal attachment to Jesus is the primary thing, and in the end the all-important thing, in our Christian experience. It is not upon our present attainments in right doing or upon our correct thinking that our hopes for character rest, but upon our simple love for Christ. If we cannot truly love such a leader we lack the basis upon which true character is built. But if we love him, if our heart leaps up at his approach, we may have to ask his forgiveness seventy times and seven, yet the root of goodness and character and grace is in us, and we shall at last attain our ideals.

✚

Scripture—And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.—*John 21:17.*

The love of Christ constraineth us.—*2 Cor. 5:14.*

✚

Christ of Judea, look thou in my heart!
Do I not love thee, look to thee, in thee
Alone have faith of all the sons of men—
Faith deepening with the weight and woe of years?
Pure soul and tenderest of all that came
Into this world of sorrow, hear my prayer.

—RICHARD WATSON GILDER ("Credo.")

✚

Prayer—Good Master, what shall we do that we may obtain eternal life? We find ourselves weak and insufficient amid the pressure of the world. Our ideals seem to slip away from us, and our evil shadows follow ever after us. But in loving thee, thou great Lover of us all, we find ourselves inspired again to holy things, and we take comfort in the midst of our incompleteness. Lord Christ, we love thee; help thou our imperfect love. Hold thou our hand in thine own, and lead us to the Father's presence, for our prayer is in thy name.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*One Day at a Time.*

Inevitably our yesterdays stretch over into today and today stretches over into our tomorrows. But neither the anxieties of yesterday nor those of tomorrow have any right to intrude themselves into today. It is intended by our Father that we shall meet each day with a fresh mind, a glad and hopeful heart and a simple trust in the divine protection and care.

✚

Scripture—Be not therefore anxious for the morrow; for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.—*Matt. 6:34.*

Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom. —*John 3:3.*

And be not fashioned according to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.—*Rom. 12:2.*

✚

If thou wouldst live unruffled by care,
Let not the past torment thee e'er;
If any loss thou hast to rue,
Act as though thou wert born anew;
Inquire the meaning of each day
What each day means itself will say.

—MATTHEW ARNOLD
("Rule of Life.")

✚

Prayer—O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth. Day unto day uttereth speech of Thee, and night unto night showeth Thy knowledge. In Thy greatness and our nearness to Thee help us to find our truest comfort, our sense of security, and our best incentive to holy living. We thank Thee for the week through which Thou art bringing us in safety. May all our times be in Thy hand until we are called by Thee to nobler service in a world without end.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*A Morning Prayer.*

How different does it make the day when we begin it with God! Our pathway opens up with light. Our duties fall into their true places. Our strength for the day's work is multiplied. Our leisure spaces are filled with sweetly restful or helpful diversions. And the end of the day is gratefulness and praise.

✚

Scripture—O Jehovah, in the morning shalt thou hear my voice; in the morning will I order my prayer unto thee and will keep watch.—*Psalm 5:3.*

✚

For a moment we may guess Thee
From thy creatures that confess Thee,
When the morn and even bless Thee,
And Thy smile is on the sea.

O the hush from earth's annoys!
O the heaven, O the joys,
Such as priests and singing boys
Cannot sing or say!

There is no more pain and crying,
There is no more death and dying,
As for sorrow and for sighing—
These shall flee away.

—F. W. H. MYERS ("Sunrise.")

✚

Prayer—Holy Father, on the morning of this day of rest and service, we invoke Thy blessing upon us. It is a day made sacred by the most precious memories of our holy religion. May all believing souls find joy and strength in the fellowship and worship of the day. Keep us from sin, we beseech Thee, and may we come to the evening with the consciousness that it has been one more day's work for the kingdom of God, and that we are a day's march nearer home. We ask in Jesus' name.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*May-Day Happiness.*

We are unfair to God if we shut Him up in the solemnities, and do not allow Him to have a part in the lighter gladnesses of our life. God is not austere and forbidding. He answers to and shares in all our human moods. The laughter of little children and the childlike joys of men and women—in them all the good Father desires to have a part.

✚

Scripture—Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice. Thou visitest the earth and waterest it. Thou greatly enrichest it. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness, and thy paths drop fatness. —*Psalm 65:8, 9, 11.*

✚

When all the birds have matins said,
And sung their thankful hymns, 'tis sin,
Nay, profanation to keep in,
When as a thousand virgins on this day
Spring, sooner than the lark, to fetch in May.

—ROBERT HERRICK ("Going Maying.")

✚

Prayer—Merciful Father, in this gracious season of the year, when all nature is bright with Thy presence and vocal with Thy praise, we find our hearts full of thankfulness. All Thy works praise Thee, and we would not be silent. Through all the generations, youth has gone forth into the wonder and mystery of forest and field to celebrate the full glory of the spring. Teach us the lessons of joy, reverence and good-will which ought to make their way into all our hearts. May we accept Thy blessings with humility and appreciation. May the whole household, old and young, share the happiness and the thankfulness which Thy mercy inspires. For Christ's sake.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*Christ in the Storm.*

Our Lord is evermore coming to us in strange ways and in unexpected places. The surprise of his coming is not less in the display of his power than in the marvelous opportuneness of his arrival. How often has he come to us when we were at the extremity of our human wisdom and strength! And always by some simple manifestation of his power our storm subsided into peacefulness and calm.

✚

Scripture—They beheld Jesus walking on the sea and drawing nigh unto the boat; and they were afraid. But he said unto them, It is I, be not afraid.—*John 6:19, 20.*

✚

Christ walks upon the sea;
Men shrink away in fear.
"Who is it on the waters?"
It is the Savior near.
And when He whispers, "Peace, be still!"
The obedient sea can work no ill.

—MARIANNE FARNINGHAM
("The City Sea.")

✚

Prayer—Our good Father, we thank Thee for life, for breath, for sanity, and for cheerfulness. We praise Thee for our daily opportunity of worship and of work. Our Savior's example of constant regard for the welfare of his disciples, and of tender solicitude for their growth in knowledge of him, inspires us with trust in his guidance and love. Help us to behold him in every emergency, even as the disciples saw him walking on the sea. And may our alarm, either at the troubles that surround us, or at the strangeness of his coming, give place to assurance and peace in the comfort of his words.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*A Morning without Clouds.* A new day! Fresh from His eternity God sends this cloudless bit of time in which we may work and dream and pray. How priceless is it, and yet our Father sends it to us as a free gift of love! Shall we not carry the joy and song and radiance of the early morning into all the hours of this gracious day? And if clouds do later gather, if outer circumstance and event prove untoward, shall we not keep the glory of the morning in our heart, and the exultant song with which we start to our tasks? If we let no cloud arise upon the horizon of our inner world we shall come to the evening-time with gladness.

✚

Scripture—He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, a morning without clouds, when the tender grass springeth out of the earth, through clear shining after rain.—*2 Sam. 23:4.*

✚

The year's at the spring
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hillside's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn;
God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world!

—ROBERT BROWNING ("Pippa Passes.")

✚

Prayer—Father, Thy gifts are new every morning and fresh every evening. Into Thy covenant of grace Thou hast called us, and we are more increasingly aware that to those who seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, all good things are added. We praise Thee for the freshness and beauty of the day, and for all days that teach us of Thy love and that lead us further into the mystery of Thy providence. Incline our hearts unto Thee, and may Thy will find ever truer embodiment in our lives.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*The Great Deliverance.*

Not without due reason have the great deliverances of the soul from sin, from error and from the second best things of life been described in classic metaphor in terms of Israel's passage through the Red Sea depths. For in our escape from evil there is evermore the mysterious combination of human effort and divine providence. In a very true sense salvation is a miracle. The whole life of faith is of the essence of the supernatural. In that divine transaction, and in every lesser deliverance from bondage to the unholy life, we take the hand of God, and turning our backs upon the darkness of the past, we go forward into life.

✚

Scripture—Pharaoh's chariots and his hosts hath he cast into the sea, and his chosen captains are sunk in the Red Sea. But the children of Israel walked on dry land in the midst of the sea.—*Ex. 15:4, 19.*

✚

The Red Sea coast, whose waves o'erthrew
Busiris and his Memphian chivalry,
While with perfidious hatred they pursued
The sojourners of Goshen, who beheld
From the safe shore their floating carcasses
And broken chariot wheels.

—JOHN MILTON ("Paradise Lost.")

✚

Prayer—God of our life, Thy mercies have been over Thy people through all the past. Thou leddest Israel through the sea, and didst guide them like a flock in the wilderness. We too need Thy shepherding and protection. Inspire us with a passionate eagerness to leave every sort of bondage and every besetting sin. Go with us like a pillar of cloud and fire. Set all the stations of our journey. And may our sorrow be turned ever into joy as we near the land of heart's desire, where we shall find our eternal rest.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Road and the Rest.*

How little of our life is known to us! And how graciously has God dealt with us in His concealment of our future! If we were able to know all, if we could see the road rising ever in wearisome hills before us, we might grow faint-hearted, and turn back. But God leads us as little children should be led, a step at a time, and gives us strength for each day's work. This truth is our best consolation. Wise indeed are we if we leave the plan of our life to Him and trust Him for the outcome.

✚

Scripture—We are journeying up to the place of which Jehovah said, I will give it to you.—*Num. 10:29.*

None shall be weary nor stumble among them; none shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken. —*Isa. 5:27.*

✚

Does the road wind up hill all the way?
Yes, to the very end.
Will the journey take the whole long day?
From morn to night, my friend.
But is there for the night a resting place?
A roof for when the slow, dark hours begin.
May not the darkness hide it from my face?
You cannot miss that inn.

—CHRISTINA ROSSETTI ("Uphill.")

✚

Prayer—Merciful Father, we thank Thee that Thou hidest from us the secrets of our future. Keep our hearts happy and brave at the present task and make us sure that our lives are ordered by Thy loving wisdom. In the companionship of our Lord we will not reproach Thee nor falter however hard the path or however steep. We accept Thy promise of rewarding rest at the end of the way, and we go forward and upward with hope and a song.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*God's Treasure.*

There is no explanation of the universe which satisfies either mind or heart save that which conceives a personal God whose great aim in all the processes of nature and society is the creation and perfection of a spiritual order of beings with whom He may find eternal companionship. All our experiences on this present level of life find their meaning in this conception. And our hope for immortality rests upon the conviction that God's enterprise cannot fail, but that His grace and power will gather all His children at last into eternal fellowship with Himself.

✚

Scripture—And they shall be mine, saith Jehovah of hosts, even mine own possession, in the day that I shall make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.—*Mal. 3:17.*

Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.—*Matt. 13:43.*

✚

Then shall the good stand in immortal bloom,
In the fair gardens of the second birth;
And each bright blossom mingle its perfume
With that of flowers which never bloomed on earth.

—HENRY W. LONGFELLOW
("God's Acre.")

✚

Prayer—Unto Thee, O God, do we lift up our souls. Compared to Thy power and goodness we are less than nothing, and vanity. But when we think of the love where with Thou hast loved us, we are overwhelmed with a humbling joy that seems unspeakable and full of glory. Help us to prove in some degree worthy of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord. May neither pride nor shame separate us from Thee. So may we be accounted fit for Thy presence in the day when Thou shalt make up Thy jewels, and all the praise shall be Thine, world without end. —*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Lord's Day.*

Today our souls take counsel with God, and we make a fresh start on the upward way. If we will receive the message of the gospel, interpreted by the Spirit of God in the sanctuary and in the associations of this day of rest, our week ahead will mark new gains in the satisfaction and joy of living.

✚

Scripture—I was in the spirit on the Lord's day. —*Rev. 1:10.*

And upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed with them.—*Acts 20: 7.*

✚

Bright shadows of true rest; some shoots of bliss;
Heaven once a week;
The next world's gladness prepossessed in this;
A Day to seek
Eternity in time; time's bower;
The narrow way;
Transplanted paradise; God's walking hour;
The cool o' the day;
Creation's jubilee; God's parle with dust;
Heaven here; man on those hills of myrrh, of flowers;
Angels descending; the return of trust;
A gleam of glory after six days' showers.

—JEREMY TAYLOR ("The Sabbath.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we accept with gratitude this gift of a new week, ushered in by the day of rest. Let Thy Spirit come to more complete possession of our souls. May we not reserve any part of our being from his gracious sway. We would learn to make the Lord's Day an ever more precious part of the week. Aid us so to use its hours that we shall not miss the love lesson of the day, nor tear away the sanctities by which it is held in the regard of others. For Christ's sake.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*The Joy of Living.*

Joy is not alone a blessing and a gift, it is also a duty and a virtue. Some lives are so ordered with good health, or inspiring circumstances, or successful achievements that joy springs up spontaneously. Other lives must find joy, if at all, in spite of illness or dull surroundings or unhopeful defeats. Yet through prayer and unselfishness and the presence of Christ, the least favored life may be kept in touch with the sources of joy and respond to them with praise and thankfulness.

✚

Scripture—There is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his works.—*Eccl. 3:22.*

As a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run his course.—*Psalm 19:5.*

✚

Whoever wakens on a day,
Happy to know and be,
To enjoy the air, to love his kind,
To labor, to be free—
Already his enraptured soul
Lives in eternity.

—BLISS CARMEN
("The Twelfth Night Star.")

✚

Prayer—Gracious God, Thou art the source of life. The beautiful world is Thy handiwork, and all the universe is the work of Thy fingers. We rejoice in life, because it is Thy gift, and we thank Thee for all the blessings by which it is sustained. May we find each day some fresh cause of satisfaction. Save us from yielding to the spirit of gloom, dissatisfaction or ill-will. Help us to be obedient to the good and wholesome laws of life, and thus may we be at peace with all the world and with Thee. Pardon our unthankfulness, and lead us into more fruitful living and deeper gratitude. For Thy name's sake.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*Sufficient Strength.*

It is the essence of our Christian faith that God puts His strength and wisdom at our disposal in times of need. Modern science talks confidently of levels of power that lie deeper than those our normal life is accustomed to draw upon, thus in a way confirming our faith in God's promise. It is a costly error indeed if, in bearing our burden, in solving our problem, or in meeting our temptation, we do not open the way, through prayer, for God's strength to reinforce our human endeavor.

✣

Scripture—And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my power is made perfect in weakness. —*2 Cor. 12:9.*

✣

Somehow strength lasted through the day,
Hope joined with courage in the way;
The feet still kept the uphill road,
The shoulders did not drop their load,
And unseen power sustained the heart
When flesh and will failed in their part,
    While God gave light
    By day and night,
And also grace to bear the smart.
    For this give thanks.

✣

Prayer—Father of mercies, we confess our sin and our lack of faith in Thee. We have gone aside into profitless ways, and we have hewn for ourselves cisterns that would not hold water. We make our tasks far too hard when we forget all that Thou art to us and to all Thy children. Help us, we pray Thee, to realize more fully the resources we have in Thy love and faithfulness. May we content ourselves with our daily supply of food and strength, knowing that Thy grace is sufficient for our need. —*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*The Garden of the Soul.*

The method of growth as we are acquainted with it in nature is also the method by which all good things come to realization in the moral and spiritual life. We cannot hurry character. It must have time to grow. Our part is to cultivate and water and protect the garden of the inner life, but it is God who gives strength to the stalk and beauty to the flower.

✚

Scripture—My beloved is gone to his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens and to gather lilies... I went down into the garden of nuts to see the green plants of the valley, to see whether the vine budded.
—*Song of Songs 6:2, 11.*

✚

My mind to me a garden seems,
Where I can walk at will,
In Arcady, the land of dreams,
Where all the world is still;
Where purple clematis hangs low,
Around a rose-wreathed portico,
And on the hedge of golden glow
The light from cloudland streams.

—MARIE HEMSTREET
("In An Old-fashioned Garden.")

✚

Prayer—Dear Father, Thou didst walk in the garden in the cool of the day to bring Thy message of warning and love to man. And evermore Thou comest to us in the beautiful visions and voices of nature, and speakest to us Thy will. Help us to understand the wealth Thou hast committed to us in the rare fruits and flowers that may bloom in the gardens of our souls. May we spare no effort in their care, even as we labor for material good. Come and counsel us in the high tillage of our lives. And may the ingathering at the last be for our enrichment and Thy approval.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*The Hearthstone.*

Not until eternity shows us the record of our earthly lives will we have any just appreciation of the debt we owe our homes. Whatever virtues of character we may possess, their roots run down into the unselfish and tender loyalties of home affection. We can only repay so great a debt by keeping the fire burning upon the hearth, remembering in constancy of love our dear ones, and living in a way that will justify their trust in us.

✣

Scripture—And there was fire on the hearth burning before him.—*Jer. 36:22.*

While I was musing the fire burned.—*Psalm 39:3.*

The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire.—*Jer. 7:18.*

✣

Each man's chimney is his golden milestone,
Is the central point from which he measures every distance
Through the gateways of the world around him.
Happy he whom neither wealth nor fashion
Nor the march of the encroaching city drives in exile
From the hearth of his ancestral homestead.

—HENRY W. LONGFELLOW
("The Golden Milestone.")

✣

Prayer—Our Father, we thank Thee for our home. It is the joy of every day to us that Thou hast set us in a circle of loving souls whose lives we can influence, and whose purposes we can share. Bless the little children, the young, the men and women of maturer life, and those who go down to the great deep. Bind us together in unity and helpfulness. May no ungentle word or ungenerous ambition creep in to mar the serenity of this good place. And may we all so shape our lives that hereafter we may renew our family circle in the Father's home. For Christ's sake. —*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Blessing of Little Children.*

What blessings do little children bestow upon us by their presence in our homes and in our hearts! Their very dependence greatens those who are responsible for their protection and guidance. Their songs and laughter help to stay those stiffening and hardening processes against which adult life wages, too often, pathetic and ineffectual opposition. And their freshness of outlook, their trustfulness, their sweet innocency and hope are a living rebuke to the over-sophistication and disillusionment that settles down upon many souls with increasing years.

✚

Scripture—But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for to such belongeth the kingdom of heaven.—*Matt. 19:14.*

✚

The little ones before the font
He clasps within His arms to bless;
As long ago, so still His wont
On them to lay peculiar stress.
Besides, of such His kingdom is;
Him they betray not with a kiss.

—JOHN HAKE ("Old Souls to Mend.")

✚

Prayer—Father of all souls, Thou Guardian of Thy children, we adore Thee for the tender care Thou hast bestowed upon us and upon all who call Thee Father. We praise Thee for those gifts of Thine that have enriched our homes, the little children committed for a time to our guidance, that thus they may be prepared for the immortal life. Forbid, our Father, that we should neglect or slight such responsibilities as come to us in the training of the young. We bring their souls to Thee, Thou Lover of all, that they may be safeguarded, nurtured and disciplined into beauty of soul, and love of the best. We ask Thy help in Jesus' name.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*True Manhood.*

Our conception of the Christian life should have two sides—service and character. It is not all doing; it is also being. The best benefit we can confer upon our friends or our community is our strength and gentleness and calmness of soul. We know how natures of this sort inspire us, and rebuke our pettiness, and shame us in any unfaithfulness. We should have no less an ideal than to make our own personality a shelter and a strength to our fellows.

✚

Scripture—I will make a man more rare than fine gold, even a man than the pure gold of Ophir.—*Isa. 13:12.*

And a man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as streams of water in a dry place, as the shade of a great rock in a weary land. —*Isa. 32:2.*

✚

> High thoughts and amiable words and courtliness,
> And the desire of fame, and love of truth,
> And all that makes a man.
>
> —ALFRED TENNYSON ("Guinevere.")

✚

Prayer—Gracious God, we acknowledge Thy power and we rejoice in Thy love. Thou hast made man in Thine image, and though too often it is defaced by selfishness and brought low by sin, yet in the life and message of our Savior we see all that humanity was intended to be, and we grow eager to realize in our own lives something of the nobility and glory of the true sons of God. May no ambition lower than the best allure us, but may we seek to be perfect, even as our Lord, in whose name we pray.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Nearness of God.*

When we put God far away in ancient history or in distant space we cheat our soul of its most precious boon. God is our mystic companion, walking by our side in the steep ascent, fighting with us in every battle we wage for purity and truth, touching our imagination with visions of the ideal, cleansing and comforting us, and lifting us up when we stumble and fall. We do not need to cry aloud to make Him hear, for the very desire to call upon Him at all is the response of our heart to the prompting of His indwelling presence.

✚

Scripture—That they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us; for in him we live and move and have our being.—*Acts 17: 27, 28.*

✚

Speak to Him thou, for He hears, and Spirit with spirit can meet —
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.

—ALFRED TENNYSON
("The Higher Pantheism.")

✚

Prayer—O God, our Father, we have found Thee in the order of nature and in the workings of history. But we have not known Thee as we should in our own lives. Yet Thou art not far from us, and it is our own mistake when we work for even a single day without Thy gracious companionship. Aid us, we beseech Thee, to make real to ourselves Thy presence and Thy help. May no cloud obscure Thy face, but may the light of Thy glory guide us all our way of life. Make this day one of joy and growth to us, and may the evening find us nearer the goal to which we take our way. For Christ's sake.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*The Blessedness of Daily Work.*

Our daily work is part of God's plan for us—and a large and basic part. We must avoid that fallacy so common among religious people that work is secular and worship is religious. Work is religious, if it is good work well done. Indeed, good work, be it ever so commonplace, is a form of worship. Out of it grows character. God reveals Himself increasingly in our times in the work-a-day life of men. He calls us to take up our tasks, with all their drudgery and exactions, in a spirit of joy and patience and courage.

✚

Scripture—Man goeth forth unto his work, and to his labor until the evening.—*Psalm 104:23.*

✚

Forenoon, and afternoon, and night; — Forenoon,
And afternoon, and night; Forenoon, and — what ?
The empty song repeats itself. No more ?
Yea, that is life; make this forenoon sublime,
This afternoon a psalm, this night a prayer,
And time is conquered, and thy crown is won.

—EDWARD ROWLAND SILL ("The Day.")

✚

Prayer—Good Father, Thou hast set before us a goodly heritage, and the lines are fallen to us in pleasant places. We have our daily work and our nightly rest, and blessings enough to make us ever grateful. Save us, we pray Thee, from discontent, from depression of spirit and from thanklessness. Make us strong and of good courage. Suffer us not to grow weary in our task, nor to faint in our pilgrimage. So shall we be fitted for higher blessings and nobler service in a world without end.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*The Evil Fruitage of Sin.*

We cannot disregard the fact of sin. No juggling of words can bring our soul to the point where we need not reckon with its reality. If we see life whole, and sanely, we will let no fictions of philosophy, nor any academic problems which engage the wit of scholars, divert our thinking into vague or unsound views of either good or evil. The first cause of sin's presence in the world is one of the mysteries of life whose explanation does not vitally affect our present duty. It is enough to know that sin is here, and that there is but one path of escape from its power—the path opened up by One who himself passed this way and met and vanquished it.

✚

Scripture—For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. —*1 Cor. 15:21, 22.*

✚

Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
Sing, heavenly muse.

—JOHN MILTON ("Paradise Lost.")

✚

Prayer—We praise Thee, O Father, for the promise of Thy holy Word that the ravage and distress wrought by sin in the world shall be overcome by the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his atonement we take refuge, and we put our trust in the assurance that death shall be swallowed up in victory. In this confidence help us to purge our lives of sin, and abide in hope of the eternal. We ask in Christ's name.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*Sincerity.*

Truth is not simply to be believed with the mind; it is to be woven into character and illustrated by all our words and acts. The principles we live by — those are the things we really believe. And though we may subscribe with the intellect to many beautiful and lofty sentiments, we do not really believe them until we take them practically to heart and build them into the structure of our character. It is the habit of translating intellectual assent into moral conviction that gives sincerity to a life and saves it from the sins of affectation and hypocrisy.

✚

Scripture—Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of Jehovah and on his law doth he meditate day and night.—*Psalm 1:1, 2.*

✚

How happy is he born and taught
That serveth not another's will;
Whose armor is his honest thought,
And simple truth his utmost skill.

—SIR HENRY WOTTON
("The Character of a Happy Life.")

✚

Prayer—God of love and mercy, passing all our understanding, grant us, we beseech Thee, faithfully to love Thee, and to walk in the way of Thy righteousness. Thou art the Protector of all who trust in Thee. We would learn a new strength daily from the knowledge of Thy favor to us. We would forget alike our past successes and failures in the contemplation of Thy perfection and the assurance of Thine aid. Make us kind and useful to our family, our friends and our associates all through this day. We ask in Jesus' name.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*Failure at the Crisis.*

It is a fact of great significance that the events in the life of our Lord repeat themselves again and again in our present experience. His birth, his ministry, his persecution, his death, his resurrection—these all are not merely historic events transpiring in the remote past, but perennial realities, present to us now in our personal experience. We now can wound our Lord and show the same weakness and cowardice toward him that the disciples of the gospel story displayed. Shall we not learn from their failures to be loyal to him in the crises where they forsook him?

✚

Scripture—And straightway, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. And they all left him, and fled. —*Mark 14:43, 50.*

✚

Forsake the Christ thou sawest transfigured, Him
Who trod the sea and brought the dead to life?
What should wring this from thee—ye laugh and ask,
What wrung it? even a torchlight and a noise,
The sudden Roman faces, violent hands,
And fear of what the Jews might do! Just that,
And it is written, "I forsook and fled."

—ROBERT BROWNING
("A Death in the Desert.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we read with shame the story of our Lord's betrayal, and the flight of the disciples. Help us to look within and there learn whether we have not betrayed and forsaken him too often, and with less excuse. Forgive us such defects and defeats. May we prove more worthy of him who loved us and gave himself for us. And may our word and example aid some other, who may be on the point of leaving Christ forever. We ask in his name. —*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Voice of God.*

For the most part, God speaks to our soul in unobtrusive ways. He does not often smite our ears with the thunder of His word, compelling us to hear whether we will or no. Instead, He steals softly into our heart and whispers there His word of warning or sweet comfort, His counsel or His stern judgment upon our deeds. God's messages to us require our undisturbed attention. We must listen, if we would catch His voice above the din and fury of earth's noises and the clamor of our human passion.

✚

Scripture—And after the fire a still small voice. —*1 Kings 19: 12.*

I will hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace.—*Psalm 85: 8.*

✚

The flash that probes the midnight ocean
Can thrill not like one look from Thee
Not Nature, in her whole bright motion,
Doth so caress and compass me;
No dove's note in the wood-recesses
While dark and dreams are over all,
Had ever half such tendernesses
As deep within my soul, Thy call.

—Louise Imogen Guiney
("The Divine Friend.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, in whom we live and move and have our being, it is by Thee we are kept in life, and have been brought to the joy and the duty of this day. Regard us in kindness, we beseech Thee, in spite of all our waywardeness. Create in us clean hearts, and renew a right spirit within us. Help us to hear Thy voice above the clamor of the world, and may it bring peace to our souls. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*Memories.*

Upon all the values of life our memories shed a revealing light. It is in memory that our fleeting experiences are endowed with perennial reality, so that we are enabled to live not merely in that tiny point of time called the present, but to have at our instant disposal all the range of our past experiences. These we may live over and over again. We owe a duty to our memory: to keep it filled with sweet and gracious recollections and to let fall away into oblivion all bitter and ungenerous and unworthy remembrances which darken and contract our present joy and power.

✚

Scripture—I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart; and my spirit maketh diligent search.—*Psalm 77:6.*

✚

Music, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory;
Odors, when sweet violets sicken,
Live within the sense they quicken.

Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,
Are heapt for the beloved bed;
And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone,
Love itself shall slumber on.

—PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY
("Music When Soft Voices Die.")

✚

Prayer—Our loving Father, our love for Thee is stirred at every remembrance of Thy mercy. Days without number Thou hast befriended us. When we were without strength, Christ came as our friend and gave himself for us. All our years Thou hast made bright with Thy mercy. Such memories, like music, comfort our hearts and make us more confident that in the future also Thou wilt not forget us. May all the sweet memories of other days draw us nearer to Thee.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*Life's Origin and Destiny.* None of us can take life merely for what it seems to be on the surface. Deep questions arise in our hearts which we cannot escape. We keep wondering as to whence we came and whither we are going. To think in simple earnestness upon the ultimate meanings of our life is an act of worship. Such thoughts lead us at last into the presence of God, the Source and Author of our being, who reveals Himself as the companion and guide of our earthly way, and who directs our footsteps toward an immortal home.

✚

Scripture—I will give thanks unto thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well....How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them they are more in number than the sand; when I awake, I am still with thee.—*Psalm 139:14, 17, 18.*

✚

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
The soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar;
Not in entire forgetfulness
And not in utter nakedness,
But, trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God who is our home.

—WILLIAM WORDSWORTH
("Ode on Immortality.")

✚

Prayer—Holy Father, on this the day of Thine own choosing, we pause from our accustomed work, and with thankfulness we lift our hearts to Thee. From Thy hand have we come. Thou knowest all our ways and art acquainted with our secret thoughts. Thou hast made us in Thine own image and for Thine own companionship. Conscious of such a beginning, help us to be satisfied with nothing less than the destiny Thou hast planned for us. May we prove worthy of Thy love.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*Silent Places.*

There is much that may be learned and enjoyed in the crowded places of the world, where throngs are busy with important tasks. But there are other experiences no less rich, and often more revealing, that can hardly occur save in the silent places, where God has a chance to speak quietly with our soul. The prophets felt that to the silent discipline of the wilderness Israel owed much of its religious awareness. Paul was confident that the open spaces of Arabia had been to him a school of silence and of prayer. And our Savior told us that the secret chamber had a value for life which the public street could not possess.

✚

Scripture—Enter into thy chamber, and pray to thy Father which seeth in secret.—*Matt. 6:6.*

I went away into Arabia.—*Gal. 1:17.*

✚

How have I seen in Araby Orion,
Seen without seeing, till he set again,
Known the night-noise and thunder of the lion,
Silence and sounds of the prodigious plain!

How have I knelt with arms of my aspiring
Lifted all night in irresponsive air,
Dazed and amazed with overmuch desiring,
Blank with the utter agony of prayer!

—F. W. H. MYERS ("St. Paul.")

✚

Prayer—Father of Spirits, we come to Thee in every time of need. But not less in hours of courage and noble purpose we need Thee, and crave Thy presence. Thou hast called each one of us to a holy work. May we not despise Thy word, but yield our lives without reluctance to Thy purposes. If we need discipline and hardship as a preparation for our work, then give us grace to enter Thy school of silence, prayer and sacrifice, that we may be ready in due season for our labors. For Thy name's sake.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*The Coming of Summer.*

The circle of the seasons is a continual manifestation of God's graciousness and power. At the threshold of the summer the divine life is ready for a new unfolding. In the silent growing of grain and herb, in the mystic partnership of man with rain and sun and soil; the Father and Creator is still present and active as truly as in the primeval creative days of the universe. All things tell of His presence and sing His praise.

✚

Scripture—And he spake to them a parable: Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, ye see it and know of your own selves that the summer is now nigh. —*Luke 21:29, 30.*

✚

All the land in flowery squares,
Beneath a broad and equal blowing wind,
Smelt of the coming summer, as one large cloud
Drew downward; but all else of heaven was pure
Up to the sun, and May from verge to verge,
And May with me from head to heel.

—ALFRED TENNYSON
("The Gardener's Daughter.")

✚

Prayer—O Thou, who art the Creator and the Benefactor, we grow happy at the thought of Thy wonderful work in nature. All the seasons of the year speak of Thee, but especially the summer, with its gifts of fruit and flowers. We would behold Thee in the beauties of Thy creation. We would lift our souls in gratitude for the mercy that spreads the earth with verdure and hangs the curtains of the clouds along the heavens. We would share with Thee the wonder of Thy works, and would find in the needs of men about us our divine chance of partnership with Thee. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*Witnesses for the Light.*

The documents of our Scripture have come a long and romantic way from the hands of those who first gave them form and substance. They are, beyond compare, our most precious literary legacy from the past. Yet they are but a fragment, albeit the most impressive fragment, of the world's witness to the truth and glory of God. Wherever men have felt the spirit of the Highest and have made it known, wherever they have beheld the vision of the Eternal and told it to their fellowmen, there a lamp has been lighted, and the darkness somewhat dispersed. And thus the total volume of the holy record has grown with the years. May we be permitted to add some worthy part to the testimony.

✚

Scripture—I, John, your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.—*Rev. 1:9.*

✚

> Afterward came the message to myself
> In Patmos isle; I was not bidden teach,
> But simply listen, take a book and write,
> Nor set down other than the given word,
> With nothing left to my arbitrament
> To choose or change: I wrote, and men believed.
>
> —ROBERT BROWNING ("A Death in the Desert.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father in heaven, we praise Thee for the holy voices through which Thou hast spoken to our world. Prophets and apostles Thou hast given us, that we might hear and know Thy will, and many other spirits have given their word of assurance. Through the years the volume of their witness has grown in content and in value. In much travail of soul and through bitter sufferings Thy servants have borne witness to the truth. Aid us in making our own lives witnesses for the truth. For Christ's sake.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*From the Ends of the Earth.*

Christianity is no merely ethnic or parochial religion. From the very first its universal character has been emphasized. It is the first time in history that this feature has been made outstanding in the preaching of any faith. This means that its Author saw the cosmic unity of man and sought to stress it. It also means that upon all Christians there rests the responsibility to interpret their message as world-wide and all-embracing. Wherever a church or any of its members ceases to be missionary there is forfeited the right to be called Christian in any worthy sense.

✚

Scripture—And I will make all my mountains a way; my highways shall be exalted. Lo, these shall come from far; and lo, these from the north and the west; and these from the land of Sinim.—*Isa. 49:11, 12.*

✚

Savior, lo, the isles are waiting;
Stretched the hand, and strained the sight,
For Thy Spirit, new creating
Love's pure flame and wisdom's light;
Give the word, and of the preacher
Speed the foot and touch the tongue,
Till on earth by every creature
Glory to the Lamb be sung.

—ARTHUR C. COXE ("Summons.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, the nations have waited long for the coming of the light. The command of our Lord has been too much forgotten by the church throughout the years. But now at last Thy people are aroused to some fair sense of the great obligation. We would have a just share in the redemption of the world. Give us a part, we pray Thee, in so wonderful a work. May our hearts respond to the call, may our offerings be given freely to the cause, and may we see all the nations awakened, even as the prophets hoped, to the glory of God and the achievement of the divine purpose.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*In Time of Dejection.*

There are times in the history of the church when deep trouble comes, and it seems impossible that the harps of joy should be sounded. Also in personal experience there are days of deep affliction. But as in exile Israel found a needed discipline, a time for meditation and amendment, so may all times of depression prove, if used aright. In such times a more accurate measurement is taken of the proportions of life, and the fair uses which may be made of the future.

✚

Scripture—By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down; yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. Upon the willows in the midst thereof we hanged up our harps. —*Psalm 137:1, 2.*

✚

Beside the streams of Babylon, in tears
Of vain desire, we sat; remembering thee,
O hallow'd Zion! and the vanish'd years,
When Israel's chosen sons were blest & free;
Our harps, neglected and untuned, we hung
Mute on the willows of the stranger's land.
If I forget, midst grief and wasting toil,
Thee, O Jerusalem! my native soil!
May my right hand forget its cunning, too!

—FELICIA DOROTHEA HEMANS ("Sonnet.")

✚

Prayer—O God our Father, even as Israel sat in deep dejection by the streams of a heathen land, so have Thy people too often sat in deep distress at the seeming overthrow of good. But may we learn that God arises and His enemies are scattered. Save us from the temptation to make despair our refuge. Arm us with fresh courage as we see all that Thou hast done, and that we with Thee may do. And may the sorrows of Thy people in the past, from which they emerged with a new hope, only assure us that the night is far spent, and the day of the world's regeneration is at hand.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*The Mightier Weapons.*

It is the astonishment of the years that God is able to use such insignificant means for the achievement of His mighty purposes. With instruments that seemed of little worth He has wrought deliverance for the cause of right. Even in days of harsh and bitter war He has shown that victory is won not by huge armaments so much as by the spirit of enthusiasm, patriotism, justice and love of right. Without these mightier weapons of the spirit the arms of the warrior fail at last.

✚

Scripture—And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers and held the torches in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands wherewith to blow; and they cried, The sword of Jehovah and of Gideon.—*Judg. 7:20.*

✚

Who ordered Gideon forth,
To storm the invader's camp,
With arms of little worth,
A pitcher and a lamp?
The trumpets made his coming known,
And all the host was overthrown.

—WILLIAM COWPER
("Jehovah Nissi, The Lord My Banner.")

✚

Prayer—Father, Thou hast given us the assurance that they that are for us are more than they that are against us. We comfort our hearts with the story of Thy mighty dealings with Thy people in days gone by. Thou didst save them, not by weapons of war, but by Thy protecting hand. Thou didst teach them the might of truth and righteousness. Even so today, O Lord, open for us the gates of salvation, and show us the path in which Thou dost go. We bring another week to its end with deep thankfulness. All the way Thou leadest us. Leave us not till the evening comes, and we reach our home. In the name of Christ. —*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Call of the Master.*

No more thrilling reflection comes to the soul of one who has caught the spirit of Christianity than this, that our Lord takes us into partnership with himself in all his redemptive work. The only way the Master can get his work done is through our co-operation. Day by day his voice is heard calling for helpers. Happy are they who hear and answer. For they become the carriers of the redemptive values of his life and death. In such souls as these the world finds the Redeemer himself who, without their responsiveness and fidelity, could not have made his grace known. My soul, hear thou the Master's call today!

✝

Scripture—Son, go work today in my vineyard. —*Matt. 21:28.*

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree. For we were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the shepherd and bishop of our souls. —*1 Pet. 2:24, 25.*

✝

I said, "Let me walk in the fields."
He said, "Nay, walk in the town."
I said, "There are no flowers there."
He said, "No flowers, but a crown."

I said, "But the sky is black,
There is nothing but noise and din."
But he wept as he sent me back—
"There is more," he said, "there is sin,"

—GEORGE MACDONALD
("The Master's Word.")

✝

Prayer—Our Father, be near us on this holy day. We present ourselves to Thee at the opening of this new week, anxious to be kept in the faith, and to share with all saints the work and blessing of our God. Deliver us from temptation, we pray Thee, and make the days of our lives profitable to Thee in the progress of that kingdom of Thine, for whose coming we ever pray.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*Complete in Him.*

Our Christian life is a call to largeness, to completeness of experience. It is not primarily self-denial but self-attainment. What we call self-denial is but the displacement of the lower by the higher and better self, the realization of greater happiness by self-control. We should free our heart forever from the thought of Christianity as a religion of subtraction or negation. It is the abounding life, the life of amplitude — possessing all things in this world of time and taking hold with joy upon the things of eternity.

✣

Scripture—And in him ye are made full, who is the head of all principality and power.—*Col. 2:10.*

All things are yours, and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's.—*1 Cor. 3:22, 23.*

✣

Yea. In Thy life our little lives are ended,
Into Thy depths our trembling spirits fall;
In Thee enfolded, gathered, comprehended,
As holds the sea her waves—Thou hold'st us all.

—ELIZA SCUDDER ("Completion.")

✣

Prayer—Father, our lives are fragmentary and imperfect until they are taken over into the fullness of Thine own being. Without Thee we have no strength or wisdom. But possessing Thee we have all things and are made complete. We invoke Thy blessing upon our efforts to attain the ampler life. Thou art our only completion. May no smaller interest than the kingdom of God absorb our time and leave us poor at the last. In Jesus' name we pray.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*The Cry of the Children.*

No sin of which our social order is guilty is more defiant of laws divine and human than the sin of exploiting childhood in industry. We stand amazed at the persistence of this evil and the inertia of our communities in tolerating it. Yet we take courage at the progress that has been made toward its abolition. And to our prayer on behalf of the children who are its victims we add our pledge to do what we can to remove altogether this blight from our civilization.

✚

Scripture —For death is come up into our windows, to cut off the children from without.—*Jer. 9:21.*

The young children ask bread and no man breaketh it unto them.—*Lam. 4:4.*

He will judge the poor of the people, he will save the children of the needy, and will break in pieces the oppressor.—*Psalm 72:4.*

✚

Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,
Grinding life down from its mark;
And the children's souls which God is calling sunward,
Spin on blindly in the dark.

—ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING
("The Cry of the Children.")

✚

Prayer—O God; our hearts are moved to pity and indignation when we see the suffering that still remains in our world after all the centuries since Jesus took the children in his arms. The cry of the children comes into our, ears, and we cannot longer refuse to give it heed. Help us, we pray Thee, to know more of the needs and sufferings of our fellow creatures, and to seek earnestly the good of those who are the children of poverty and oppression. And may we find in this good work the approval of our Master, in whose name we ever pray.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*A Summer Day.*

In these zenith days of the year, when the sun is highest and life teems within the warm earth, the most prosaic of us feels a certain kinship with the poet who sings nature's praises and lingers over her particular features with the fondness of a lover. Flowers are flinging their wanton beauty at the sky, and the passionate rain bursts in blessing upon valley and hill. Our Bible was written by men who loved nature and saw in her the unceasing creative activity of God. This, no doubt, is one of the many reasons why our hearts respond to the messages of its psalmists and seers.

✚

Scripture—Thou visitest the earth and waterest it, thou enrichest it....Thou waterest its furrows abundantly; thou settlest the ridges thereof; thou makest it soft with showers; thou blessest the springing thereof.
—*Psalm 65:9, 10.*

✚

And what is so rare as a day in June!
Then, if ever, come perfect days;
Then heaven tries earth if it be in tune,
And over it softly her warm ear lays;
Whether we look, or whether we listen,
We hear life murmur, or see it glisten.

—JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL
("The Vision of Sir Launfal.")

✚

Prayer—O Lord, we thank Thee for the coming of this gracious season of warmth and fertility. Thou enrichest us with the blessings of nature and all the earth seems full of Thy praise. We would not miss our part in the anthem of creation. Give to us the sense of joy in the works of Thy hands, and may we see in all nature the proof of the power and love of our Father. Save us from unthankfulness and failure to fulfill our high service as Thy children. For Thy name's sake.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*Contentment.*

Contentment is not passive acquiescence in things as they are. That is only one side of it. It is an active, not a passive, virtue. It rests upon the discernment that one's life is a spiritual, not a material or temporal, enterprise; that its source and end are found in some gracious purpose God is working out for us; and that this divine purpose can be wrought out in the particular set of circumstances in which we are placed as well as in any other. When our soul once learns this truth it shall have gone far toward that moral mastery of event and accident which brings strength of character and inward peace.

✚

Scripture—I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content.—*Phil. 4:11.*

But godliness with contentment is great gain. —*1 Tim. 6:6.*

✚

I am content with what I have,
Little be it or much;
And, Lord, contentment still I crave,
Because thou savest such.

—JOHN BUNYAN ("Song.")

✚

Prayer—Our kind Father, we would escape the evil that is in the world, and we know that through the power of Thy Holy Spirit, and by the virtue of a contented mind, we can live each day in the atmosphere of thankfulness and happiness. Save us from discontent, from vain ambitions, from longings after things that are not best. May Thy gifts of love and goodwill so enrich us that we shall be satisfied evermore with that good companionship of the pure and holy to which Thou dost bring us. And may we attain at last to eternal life. For Christ's sake.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*Discomfited Foes.*

God has a way of teaching righteousness by the stern lessons of history. Nations that went forth in arrogance, boasting of their power and purpose to conquer the world have been brought to a humbler and a better mind by the drastic discipline of defeat. It is not always the case in this disordered world that pride and wickedness are punished in manifest ways. But at times the divine purposes shine forth like stars, and the signs of God's rule in the universe are flung out like banners. May we have the discernment to perceive that it is God who passes judgment, and in the end of the day pronounces doom.

✣

Scripture—And the angel of Jehovah went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and four score and five thousand; and when men arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies.—*Isa. 37:36.*

✣

Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen;
Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.

—GEORGE GORDON BYRON
("The Destruction of Sennacherib.")

✣

Prayer—Thou hast shown us marvelous things, our Father, in the providences of history. Nor are the events of our own age without large meaning for those who observe. In the power and protection of God we take refuge. We arm ourselves in the confidence of the children of God against all foes that assail us. We can do all things in Christ who strengthens us. Give us the victory, we pray Thee, through him, and may we learn by daily struggle and daily conquest the power that is ours to overcome the world. —*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*Day by Day.*

The sharp separation of our lives into days is a benign arrangement of the Creator. It gives to our finite capacity as much burden and opportunity as we can grasp at one time. Were there not such demarkations within our experience we should be lost amid the confusion of our unfinished past and distracted by our apprehensions of the unescapable future. But God sends us one little day at a time, fresh each morning. In the twilight he takes it back to Himself, graciously and justly to judge it for what it is. And whatever it is, He sends us again another day, fresh and sweet, wherein, rested by sleep and fortified by prayer, our soul may give a better account of itself.

✚

Scripture—The thing of a day in its day.—*Lev. 23:37.*

Ye stand this day all of you before Jehovah your God. —*Deut. 29:10.*

✚

> Out of eternity this new day is born;
> Into eternity at night will return.
>
> —THOMAS CARLYLE ("Today.")

✚

Prayer—Our God and Father, teach us the sufficiency of one day at a time. We love to look further ahead, and see the distant scene. But we come, through the discipline of years and by the grace of communion with Thee, to know that one step at a time is enough. May that step be always in the right direction, so that in our progress toward eternity we may have no steps to retrace. We thank Thee for the week we are completing. Take its record, and bless its good work, helping us to do better for the next. And to Thy name shall be the praise, evermore.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Eternal Word.*

Another worship day has come, the day wherein we look up from our work, from our plans and our play, to behold the face of Him whose we are and whom we serve. It is in His mind that all our days and all the disparate duties of our lives are unified and explained. His Word, His purpose for us, rises above our finite experience into the eternal. It was His Word, His purpose for us, that became incarnate in Jesus our Lord.

✚

Scripture—In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God, and the Word was God....And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.—*John 1:1, 14.*

✚

Amid the eternal silences
God's endless Word was spoken;
None heard but He who always spake,
And the silence was unbroken.

O marvelous! O worshipful!
No song nor sound is heard,
But everywhere, and every hour,
In love, in wisdom, and in power,
The Father speaks his dear Eternal Word.

✚

Prayer—Our good Father, this day once more we are reminded of Thy saving grace, which has not left us in darkness, but has given us the light of life. We adore Thee for Christ, the Word of God incarnate, who has entered into the fullness of our life that we through him may know the way into the fullness of Thine own life. May this day bring to us the joy of worship with Thy people, and of hearing the living Word proclaimed. Keep us this day without sin, we beseech Thee, and may the evening bring us the peace of Thy presence.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*The Soul's Eternity.*

How irrepressible is our soul's faith in its immortality! No plans for this life alone seem to satisfy us. All our satisfactions are rooted in eternity. God has not given us merely a logical proof, a scientific demonstration, of immortality, but He has organized immortality into the very structure of our soul. We are made for the Beyond as well as for the Here, and all skeptical thinking that casts doubt upon the soul's survival of death ignores the deep foundations of our nature.

✚

Scripture—For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive....The last enemy that shall be abolished is death.—*1 Cor. 15:22, 26.*

✚

The stars shall fade away,
The sun himself grow dim with age
And nature sink in years;
But thou shalt flourish in immortal youth,
Unhurt amid the war of elements,
The wreck of matter, and the crush of worlds.

—JOSEPH ADDISON ("Cato.")

✚

Prayer—O God, our Father, we praise Thee for Thine image in us. Thou hast created us with the seeds of eternity in our natures, and with the vision of its wonders before our eyes. Save us, we beseech Thee, from the sin and disaster of missing so divine a destiny. May we not decline to the low levels of earthly satisfaction, but seek the things which are above, where alone immortal natures can be satisfied. And may we nourish the eternity that is in us, till in the image of Christ we find our true and holy life. For his sake.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*In the Country with God.*

The escape from the city into the wide spaces and sweet odors and the calmness of the country always brings not merely physical rest and delight, but enlargement of soul. In the country God speaks in a voice we do not hear amid the din of city noises, and He has room there to unroll before our eyes vast beauties which the cramped corners of our cities cannot contain. His messages to us are multitudinous, in city and country, and we should ever keep an attentive spirit that we may not miss any accent of His voice.

✚

Scripture—And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide.—*Gen. 24:63.*

And there were shepherds in the same country abiding in the field, and keeping watch by night over their flock. —*Luke 2:8.*

✚

Here in the country's heart
Where the grass is green,
Life is the same sweet life
As it e'er hath been.

God comes down in the rain,
And the crops grow tall—
This is the country faith,
And the best of all.

—NORMAN GALE
("The Country Faith.")

✚

Prayer—Holy Father, we bless Thee for the calm and restfulness of the open country, the shadow of trees, the music of running streams, and the sense of wholesome peace that nature imparts. May those of us who dwell in the country realize the blessing of our lot, and those of us who abide in town or city seek such renewal of soul from time to time as the broader life of nature yields. And may our faith in Thee be quickened by all experiences in the field, the forest and the wide and open world.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*A Steadfast Heart.*

Some things the strong soul must regard as fixed. If our soul has no rootage, no abiding foundations, no deep convictions with which to meet the changing flow of circumstance and event, then is it weak, easily swept away by plausible teaching, and as easily cast down by untoward experience. But if we have put God forever beyond dispute, if to Christ we have given for good and all the keeping of our heart, we shall be unafraid and unmoved whatever may befall us, or however enticingly we may be tempted.

✚

Scripture—My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed.—*Psalm 57:7.*

He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in Jehovah.—*Psalm 112:7.*

✚

One who brings
A mind not to be changed by place or time;
The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.

—JOHN MILTON ("Paradise Lost.")

✚

Prayer—Our heavenly Father, we praise Thee that by Thy strength we are able to make our lives triumphant over time and place and evil fortune. In the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, Thou hast given us the supreme example, of a human life, divinely calm and serene in the midst of all disturbing scenes. We crave the mind that was his, the peace and confidence, the sense of infinite things, the assurance that all things work together for good to them that love God. Endue us with his spirit. We ask for his sake. —*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*As in a Mirror, Darkly.*

It is the sages who have dwelt most upon the limitations of our human understanding. To the wise man his own wisdom seems but a broken fragment of reality. It is through such humility of mind that the wise have obtained their wisdom. Without weakening our convictions of divine things, we need ever to cultivate the fine virtue of open-mindedness, so that God's continually unfolding truth may find its way into mind and heart, correcting errors and pointing ever to that Dawn when we shall see and know indeed!

✚

Scripture— For now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know fully, even as also I was fully known.—*1 Cor. 13:12.*

✚

> Here through the feeble twilights of this world
> Groping, how many, until we pass and reach
> That other where we see as we are seen.
>
> —ALFRED TENNYSON
> ("Geraint and Enid.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we learn to know our limitations as we understand Thy greatness. We know but little, but Thou art all-wise. We are weak, but in Thy strength we can do all things. Lighten our eyes, we pray Thee, that we may see. Touch our lips with coals from off the altar, that we may testify of Thee. Strengthen our hands, that we may fulfill Thy will during the little day of our lives. And bring us in due season to that better life, where we shall see face to face and know as we have been known. We pray in Jesus' name.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The True Gifts.*

In our gratitude to God for the graciousness of His providence in guiding and keeping our lives and showering us with His bounties, and especially for His gift of Christ to our world and our hearts, it is a sound instinct that prompts us to make some gift to Him, not as a return, but as a token of our love. The gifts that please God are our offerings to the cause of His Kingdom, our deeds of consideration and service to our brothers, and more than all else, our strength of soul, the gentleness and patience of our heart, and the courage that meets life each day with a song.

✚

Scripture—Wise men from the east came to Jerusalem....And they came into the house and saw the young child with Mary, his mother; and they fell down and worshipped him; and opening their treasures they offered unto him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. —*Matt. 2:1, 11.*

✚

Who gives his life for beauty's need,
King Gaspar could no more;
Who serves the truth with single mind
Shall stand with Melchior;
And love is all that Balthasar
In crested censor bore.

—BLISS CARMEN
("The Twelfth Night Star.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we have read the story of the wise men who came from the east to the holy city to bring their gifts to the infant king. We also would worship at his feet. But help us, we beseech Thee, to bring the nobler gifts of courage, faithfulness and love, which are beyond all price. We know that bearing such treasures, we shall always find welcome and approval of him. Hear and aid us for his sake.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*Survival.*

Science teaches us that we live in a world where nothing is lost. Things change, but their elements survive and reappear in new forms of matter or of life. If God so orders the natural world with perfect economy, shall He not much more guard and keep the precious things of the spiritual world? We may be sure that goodness and beauty and truth, though they seem at times to be dashed to atoms by their foes, will reappear in forms more potent and enduring.

✠

Scripture—For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith Jehovah, so shall your seed and your name remain.
—*Isa. 66:22.*

✠

Nothing that is shall perish utterly,
But perish only to revive again
In other forms — as clouds restore in rain
The exhalations of the earth and sea.
Men build their houses from the masonry
Of ruined tombs; the passion and the pain
Of hearts that long have ceased to beat
Remain, and throb in hearts that are, or are to be.

✠

Prayer—Merciful God, we think of Thee amid the changing processes of life, and our hearts grow strong and confident that though all around us melts into new forms, nothing is lost, and that we ourselves and all that love counts dear cannot be lost. Comfort us with this assurance, till our lives become immortal in companionship with Thee. We thank Thee for the week gone by. Make all our days Thy care, and bring us to the never-ending day of eternity. For Jesus' sake.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Coming of the Kingdom.*

To share in Christ's Kingdom, even by faithfully praying for its coming, is glory indeed for a human soul. But when to aspiration we are privileged to add an actual partnership with the King in bringing in the good day of his reign—this is life's supreme dignity. The King counts on our loyalty, on our initiative, on our unselfish service to help him cast out evil from the race, and spread justice, mercy, peace and brotherliness in all the earth.

✣

Scripture—Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.—*Matt. 6:10.*

The kingdoms of the world are become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever.—*Rev. 11:15.*

✣

The urgent need, the holy hymn,
With these all time is filled,
The altar light is never dim,
The prayer is never stilled.

Thy kingdom come! Thy will be done!
The watchmen keep their tryst:
Not one, but all hours, Thou hast won
The world to Thee, O Christ!

—MARIANNE FARNINGHAM
("Without Ceasing.")

✣

Prayer—Holy Father, we praise Thee for the prayer which our Savior left us, in whose wide embrace are gathered all the needs of our common humanity. How many thousands daily repeat the prayer, not in meaningless and formal phrase, but with hearts fully set upon the answer. In the faith that Thou wilt make good the response, we ever pray. And the knowledge that we are part of a mighty host lends strength to our effort and confidence to our hope. Give us to see of the travail of our souls, and to be satisfied.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*The Triumph of Truth.*

Only the faith that the universe is keyed to truth, that it braces and supports and gives ultimate victory to the truth, will keep our soul free from the taint of pessimism. The triumph of error is temporary and apparent only. The dominant force in the world is nothing less than the will of God, and that will must in the end prevail. Herein is the inspiration of all great souls who have stood alone with truth against the jibes and persecutions of the scornful. Courage and faith like theirs, in our humbler spheres, brings us into spiritual fellowship with them.

✚

Scripture—And in thy majesty ride on prosperously, because of truth.—*Psalm 45:4.*

God will send forth his loving-kindness and his truth. —*Psalm 57:3.*

✚

Truth, crushed to earth, shall rise again;
The eternal years of God are hers;
But Error, wounded, writhes in pain,
And dies among his worshippers.

—WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT
("The Battlefield.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we are glad that the universe is Thine own, and that its forces are set for the triumph of the right and the overthrow of wrong. We wish this same triumph in our own lives. Save us, we beseech Thee, from the sin and folly of world-wide hopes which we do not first attempt to realize in our own lives. Help us to love the truth, to speak the truth, and to make truth the commanding force in our characters. And may we make him our daily companion and friend, who is for us and for all men the living Truth. In his name we ask.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*God's Pervasive Presence.*

It should be reckoned a great day for our soul when we graduate from the kindergarten way of thinking of God as up in the sky and learn to think of Him as pervading His whole universe. The laws by which, as science teaches us, the world is held together—what are they but our human way of designating and describing the habitual activities of God? He is inside His world, though not exhausted by it, but controlling and evolving it, and crowning it with His power and grace.

✚

Scripture—Can any hide himself in secret places so that I shall not see him? saith Jehovah. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith Jehovah.—*Jer. 23:24.*

Who maketh winds his messengers; flames of fire his ministers.—*Psalm 104:4.*

✚

O birds of ether without wings!
O heavenly ships without a sail.
O fire of fire. O best of things.
O mariners who never fail.
Sail swiftly through your amber vault,
An animated law, a presence to exalt.

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON
("The Poet.")

✚

Prayer—O Lord, Thou art everywhere. There is no escape from Thee or Thy swift messengers. If we should take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea, even there wouldst Thou find us. But we have no wish to escape from Thee, or to evade the laws of Thy kingdom. We are upborne by Thee, and all our joy is in Thy service. Aid us, we beseech Thee, to avoid the sins of rebellion and ingratitude, and may we delight to find our refuge in Thee. In Christ's name we ask.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*The Imperishable Word.*

Our imagination kindles at the thought of God's increasing revelation, which, from the beginning, He has made through great souls who have lent themselves as willing instruments of His word. Amongst all peoples He has spoken, in many tongues, in varying forms, in uneven degrees of fullness. But wherever His word has found even partial utterance it has become an imperishable possession of mankind. The rich dower of this cumulative revelation we have inherited. In its light we walk, and of its substance we partake.

✚

Scripture—All flesh is as grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower faileth, but the word of the Lord abideth forever. —*1 Peter 1:24.*

✚

The word unto the prophets spoken
Was writ on tables yet unbroken:
The word by seers or sybils told,
In groves of oak, or fanes of gold,
Still floats upon the morning wind,
Still whispers to the willing mind.
One accent of the Holy Ghost
The heedless world hath never lost.

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON
("The Problem.")

✚

Prayer—We praise Thee, O Lord, for the word of testimony borne by Thy servants through all the years. Prophets and teachers, saints and martyrs, have lifted up their voices to speak for Thee. Never hast Thou left Thyself without witness among any people, but Thy far-flung word has wakened the world to the power of the truth. Give us larger faith in Thy word, in its divine message, its transforming power, and its imperishable vitality. Then shall we ourselves be filled with its holy passion, and permitted to share its glory.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*The Victors.*

One's judgment of victory or defeat, success or failure, depends upon the point of view. What one person would call brilliant success another may call empty failure. Of this we may be sure, that any success won by intrigue or chance or mere force is hollow and illusory, compared to the victories won by character and hard work and merit and faith in the truth and the right. Every victory through moral strength receives the plaudits of God and the promise of eternity, even though it pass quite unregarded by the world.

✚

Scripture—For whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith.—*1 John 5:4.*

✚

Speak, history! Who are life's victors? Unroll thy long annals, and say,
Are they those whom the world called the victors, who won the success of a day?
The martyrs, or Nero? The Spartans, who fell at Thermopylae's tryst,
Or the Persians and Xerxes? His judges or Socrates? Pilate or Christ?

—WILLIAM WETMORE STORY
("Io Victis.")

✚

Prayer—Our Heavenly Father, never would we forget the lesson Thou hast taught us in the life of our Savior, that Thou hast chosen the weak instruments of the world to confound the mighty. Save us, we pray Thee, from the mistake of taking outward appearances for reality. Give us clearer vision, to see that one with God is mightier than all adversaries, and that two in Thy strength shall put ten thousand to flight. And may we strive for victory, not in our own might, but in the power of him who loved us and gave himself for us.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Charm of Poetry.*

All true thinking, whether of scientist or poet, should lead our soul into the presence of God. But ofttimes the poet seems to speak the surer and the deeper word. It is not strange that this is so. For the scientist uses chiefly but one of the mind's powers, the intellect. But the poet draws upon many springs within the soul—the intellect, the feelings, the will, the imagination; and all these melt into a sweet song that charms the heart while it kindles the vision and persuades the mind and sets the will free for noble action.

✚

Scripture—My heart overfloweth with a goodly matter; I speak the things which I have made touching the king; my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.—*Psalm 45:1.*

For in him we live and move and have our being, as certain of your own poets have said.—*Acts 17:28.*

✚

Read from some humbler poet,
Whose songs gushed from his heart,
As showers from the clouds of summer,
Or tears from the eyelids start.

Such songs have power to quiet
The restless pulse of care,
And come like the benediction
That follows after prayer.

—HENRY W. LONGFELLOW
("The Day Is Done.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we thank Thee for the gift of song, and for all who have lightened the burdens of mankind by the charm and inspiration of noble words. It is Thy gift to mankind, and by it Thou hast made easier and more beautiful the life of our race. Help us to cherish in our hearts the utterances of those who have given us the music of great poetry; to fill our minds with its messages; and to adore Thee, the great Poet and Artist, whose crowning work is the soul redeemed through Christ.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*Spiritual Growth.*

The opportunity to grow in moral strength and in knowledge is not least among the many inspiring aspects of experience. Our soul is yet in the making. It does not now appear what it shall be. Day by day an increment of power and of wisdom is added to us. The increasing years tend to harden and fix not only our physical habits but our ways of thinking and our spiritual outlook. This tendency we should stand within reasonable limits, keeping our mind open to new truth, forming the habit of revising our opinions, and especially keeping our soul accessible to fresh and enlarging disclosures of spiritual reality.

✚

Scripture—But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and forever, amen.—*2 Peter 3:18.*

But speaking truth in love, may grow in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ.—*Eph. 4:15.*

✚

Year after year beheld the silent toil
That spread his lustrous coil;
Still, as the spiral grew,
He left the past year's dwelling for the new,
Stole with soft step its shining archway through,
Built up its idle door,
Stretched in his last-found home, & knew the old no more.

—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES
("The Chambered Nautilus.")

✚

Prayer—Eternal Father, Thou art ever the same, and Thy years fail not. But Thou hast set us the task and the joy of constant growth toward likeness to Thyself. Every day we would attain some part of that divine ambition. Every day we would leave behind us something of our imperfect life. And may the passing weeks bring us assurance that our efforts are not in vain, but that we are making progress toward the goal of all our striving, the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. In his name.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Nations and the Word.*

The life of God has never been confined to any one section of humanity, nor has the word of God been limited to one people. Wherever hands have been lifted in prayer and souls have searched for the Infinite, there God has been present, and there some fragments of the divine word have been spoken. Supreme among all such oracles of God stand our Scriptures. And where these Scriptures have gone new life has sprung into being and new institutions have taken form, the products of the Spirit of God making for a richer civilization that shall at last be worthy of the name of Christ.

✚

Scripture—And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from afar.—*Isa. 5:26.*

I am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations. —*Ezek. 39:27.*

✚

Out from the heart of nature rolled
The burdens of the Bible old;
The litanies of nations came,
Like the volcano's tongue of flame,
Up from the burning core below,
The canticles of love and woe.

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON
("The Problem.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we thank Thee for Thy holy Word, which has come to us laden with the hopes, the sufferings and the triumphs of Thy people through many generations. It has opened to us the secret of the divine life as revealed in Christ, and it has made clear to us the long and painful efforts needed to realize throughout the world the ideals which he has disclosed in life and teaching to the race. On this day of worship we meet Thy people in the sanctuary to join in Thy worship and to listen to the message of the gospel. And may the Word be preached with power wherever the name of Christ is honored. We ask for his sake.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*America's Missions.*

Every nation that puts a proper estimate upon its place in history must believe that it is called of God to perform some special and appointed task. This was true of ancient Israel, and in the perspective of history we can perceive that it has been true of other peoples. But none has ever had a larger right or a deeper obligation to take seriously its divine function than our own. To proclaim and practice a true democracy, and to take our place with those who contend for universal justice and humanity, is our majestic and inspiring mission.

✚

Scripture—Behold, I have given him for a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander to the peoples. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not; and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee, because of Jehovah thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel. —*Isa. 55:4, 5.*

✚

There's freedom at thy gates and rest
For Earth's down-trodden and oppprest,
A shelter for the hunted head,
For the starved laborer toil and bread,
Power, at thy bounds,
Stops and calls back his baffled hounds.

—WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT ("America.")

✚

Prayer—O God of our land, we praise Thee for the history through which Thou hast brought us. On the foundations laid by our fathers under Thy providence there has been builded a nation which opens its doors to the oppressed of all the earth, and stands as the champion of law and liberty. Help us, our Father, so to understand our opportunity that we shall assume among the nations of the earth the place which Thy providence and the world's need have assigned us, and so may we interpret to all men both our national ideals and our Christian faith.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*The Higher Wisdom.*

Wisdom is not the learning that the intellect knows; it is the knowledge that has sprung out of life itself. Men seek for learning and discover it, but wisdom comes from God. In our daily contacts with His providence God is evermore unveiling to our soul a higher order of truth than that which science discovers. To know this higher truth is wisdom. Learning may give us knowledge about God's ways and processes of working, but wisdom gives us personal acquaintance with the Father. However scant may be our store of learning, the treasures of wisdom are accessible to us all, for God gives them in response to our faithfulness, our courage and our habit of prayer.

✣

Scripture—The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.—*James 3:17.*

✣

Oh, when I am safe in my sylvan home,
I tread on the pride of Greece and Rome;
And when I am stretched beneath the pines,
Where the evening star so holy shines,
I laugh at the lore and pride of man,
At the sophist schools and the learned clan;
For what are they all, in their high conceit,
When man in the bush with God may meet?

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON
("Good-bye, Proud World.")

✣

Prayer—Father of grace, Thou God of wisdom and of might, we are very weak and ignorant, and we lean on Thy sustaining love for our welfare. We thank Thee for such knowledge as we can secure from study. Thou hast given us many opportunities of self-enrichment in the institutions of learning and the other means of culture which abound in our land. Yet help us to seek above all things to know Jesus Christ who is the power of God and the wisdom of God.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*The Breath of God.*

The relationship of God to our soul is very penetrating and searching. We cannot express the influences of the divine Spirit upon us except by the most refined figures of speech. In the experience of spiritual cleansing and renewal God seems to come to us as a purifying breath, or wind, subtly searching out the hidden places of our inner life and leaving us a sense of moral invigoration and power.

✚

Scripture—Thou didst blow with thy wind. —*Ex. 15:10.*

Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden.—*Song of Songs 4:16.*

The wind bloweth where it will, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh and whither it goeth. So is everyone that is born of the Spirit. —*John 3:8.*

✚

Winnow me through with thy keen, clean breath,
Wind with the tang of the sea.
Speed through the closing gates of the day,
Find me and fold me, have thy way,
And take thy will of me.

Use my soul as you used the sky,
Gray sky of this sullen day.
Clear its doubt, as you sped the wrack
Of the storm-cloud, bringing the splendor back,
Giving it gold for gray.

—ARTHUR KETCHUM
("The Sea Breath.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, in our consciousness of imperfection and sin, we yearn for Thy cleansing breath to purge us from all evils of flesh and spirit. Thou knowest how little we attain to the ideals set before us in the life of Jesus, or even in our own best hours. Winnow the chaff out of our lives, we beseech Thee, and give us the joy of the clean heart and the pure mind. For we ask in Jesus' name. —*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*The Concealments of God.*

Our heart sometimes finds itself in a mood of complaining because God and the things of the spiritual world seem so elusive and vague, while the infinitely less important things of the physical world—the stones, the trees, the solid ground, our bodies, the stars—should be so indisputably real. There are many things that we might say to this complaint of our heart, but the conclusive answer is simply this: that moral character is possible only in a world whose realities are thus veiled. Our soul depends for its very life upon the chance to exercise faith, and faith would have no place in a world whose realities were all objects of sight.

✚

Scripture—We walk by faith, not by sight. —*2 Cor. 5:7.*

It is the glory of God to conceal a thing.—*Prov. 25:2.*

✚

> Naked belief in God....sears too much
> The sense of conscious creatures to be borne.
> It were the seeing Him no flesh shall dare.
> Some think Creation's meant to show Him forth;
> I say it's meant to hide Him all it can.
>
> —ROBERT BROWNING
> ("Bishop Blougram's Apology.")

✚

Prayer—Thou Fatherly Spirit, by whose love our souls are upheld, we confess in Thy presence our frailty of character and the faultiness of all our thinking. Still the complaining of our hearts, we beseech Thee, and show us how much more wonderful it is to live in a world whose realities extend out into an infinite fringe of mystery, than in a world whose truth might be apprehended without effort and without faith. We know only in part, but we thank Thee for increasing knowledge, for the steady clearing of our vision as we take each fresh step in the path of duty. If we cannot see the full glory of Thy face, we can see Jesus, upon whose countenance Thou didst cast the reflection of Thine own. May we keep close to his side and find Thee in him.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Glory of Summer.*

Primitive man was not vividly impressed by the beauty of nature. Our Bible shows that the Hebrews from whose midst the prophets and psalmists sprung were more sensitive to the loveliness of their land and the wonder of changing seasons than other ancient nations. Into modern life there has come a more appreciative mood. Poetry, art and nature-study have made us conscious of a world of beauty on every side. That this is also a world of God's making, designed for our enjoyment, completes our sense of its value and delight.

✚

Scripture—The fig tree ripeneth her green figs, and the vines are in blossom. They give forth their fragrance. —*Song of Songs 2:13.*

✚

Now is the high tide of the year,
And whatever of life hath ebbed away
Comes flooding back with a ripply cheer,
Into every bare inlet and creek and bay;
Now the heart is so full that a drop overfills it,
We are happy now because God wills it;
No matter how barren the past may have been,
'Tis enough to know that the leaves are green.

—JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL
("The Vision of Sir Launfal.")

✚

Prayer—Father of mercies, we adore Thee that Thou hast given us so marvelous a world in which to live, with its changing seasons and its never-ending sources of satisfaction. We grow ashamed when we stop to think of our own selfish negligence of Thy goodness, and our failure to enjoy the loveliness Thou has spread about us. Help us this day really to open our hearts to the good that Thou art sending us, and to receive in thankfulness the gifts of nature at Thy hands.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*The Sin of Foolishness.*

It is a mistake to ask God's forgiveness only for those faults wherein we are aware of having a guilty intention. Probably most of our sins are chargeable to thoughtless folly rather than to any depravity of purpose. We should learn to deal sternly with our soul in respect to those wrongs that spring out of our carelessness, our lack of intelligent orientation, and our childish folly. It is through sins like these that we do most harm and miss our greatest opportunities. The wisdom God promises to give will enlarge our view, sharpen our perception and save us from many costly errors.

✚

Scripture—It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife; but every fool will be quarreling.—*Prov. 20:3.*

The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself.—*Eccl. 10:12.*

✚

'Tis not by guilt the onward sweep
Of truth and right, O Lord, we stay;
'Tis by our follies that so long
We hold the earth from heaven away.

The ill-timed truth we might have kept—
Who knows how sharp it pierced and stung!
The word we had not sense to say—
Who knows how grandly it had rung!

—EDWARD ROWLAND SILL
("The Fool's Prayer.")

✚

Prayer—Gracious God, we confess before Thee our sins and our follies. Sinful we are, and still more foolish. We miss daily a thousand blessings of Thy sending, because we will not see or understand. We make daily a thousand mistakes that do harm we cannot calculate. Help us to learn wisdom from Thee, dear Father, and so to order our lives that we may bring our days to wiser and happier issue. For Christ's sake.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*Faith and Prayer.*

Expectancy is of the essence of success in all our relationships with God. To doubt is not only to paralyze our own aspirations but to inhibit God's power and grace. Our faith, our hope, our assurance that, knowing our need, God will delight to aid us—these are the channels through which His blessing must come, and if they be closed He has no entrance to our soul. But if they be kept open and free—who shall put limits to what God will do for us?

✚

Scripture—Fear not, only believe.—*Mark 11:24.*

✚

Let blow the trumpet strongly when I pray,
Till this embattled wall of unbelief,
My prison, not my fortress, fall away;
Then, if Thou willest, let my day be brief,
So Thou wilt strike Thy glory through the day.

—ALFRED TENNYSON
("Doubt and Prayer.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we lift our hearts to Thee in thankfulness for the abundance of Thy grace that has given us so full and competent a revelation of Thy nature and the purposes Thou hast for us. Help us, we beseech Thee, to have such faith in Thee and in our Lord Jesus Christ that all things that are best may become possible to us through him. We want such confidence as shall lead us to pray with full assurance of success. On this Thy holy day may our worship be full of sincerity. And bring us serenity of mind for all the work of the coming week. We ask in Jesus' name. —*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*The Beloved Dead.*

Our soul needs discipline as to a true and wholesome way of thinking about our dear ones who have passed beyond earthly sight and touch. Too often the thought of them weakens our self-control, overborne as our heart is by the sense of their being no longer with us. Because we fear this weakness we are sometimes tempted, though against all our instincts, to allow them to pass quite out of the range of our meditation. By this we lose much. They are nearer to us than we conceive, and we may keep their companionship through our communion with God.

✚

Scripture—I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.—*2 Sam. 12:23.*

I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.—*Matt. 22:32.*

✚

How can I cease to pray for thee? Somewhere
In God's great universe thou art today;
Can He not reach thee with His tender care?
Can He not hear me when for thee I pray?
What matters it to Him who holds within
The hollow of His hand all worlds, all space,
That thou art done with earthly pain and sin?
Somewhere within His ken thou hast a place.

—JULIA C. R. DORR ("Somewhere.")

✚

Prayer—Holy Father, into Thy tender mercy and love we have committed those who have gone on into the life beyond. Our hearts are often sore within us at their going. We miss them sadly, even after many days. We have no way to come to speech with them, but we know that they are in Thy keeping. Now that we see them no more our hearts prompt us to bear them up to Thee in our petitions. Hold them safe in Thy good care, we pray Thee, till the night is over and the shadows flee away.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*The Brevity of Time.*

With the increase of years there grows upon all men the sense of the swiftness and brevity of time. If to our childhood's eyes the years looked like great planets, they now seem like tiny beads strung together on the thread of our remembrance. This brevity and inadequacy of time—a day, a week, a year — is one of the most solemnizing aspects of our experience. Since the day is short and life at best is so early at an end, our will should awake to a prompt grasping of the present hour, and a decisive surrender to the instant claim of the holy will of God, not waiting for tomorrow, but yielding today.

✚

Scripture—Oh, remember how short my time is. —*Psalm 89:47.*

But this I say, brethren, the time is short.—*1 Cor. 7:29.*

✚

We are minutes, use us well,
For how we are used we must one day tell.
Who uses minutes has hours to use,
Who loses minutes, whole years must lose.

—PARK BENJAMIN ("Minutes.")

✚

Prayer—We bring to Thee, our Father, the praise of a new day. For the rest of the night we thank Thee. For the strength of body and of mind which we bring to our work we are grateful. Help us to count sacred the moments of this day. Thine they are, as we are Thine, and we would not misuse them. In all that engages our attention, our work, our study or our play, let us hold in mind the wonder of the time Thou givest us, and never send it on without some good and useful employment. This we ask in the name of Christ.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*The World Beautiful.*

God desires us, His children, to enjoy the glories and delights of the world-home which He has made for us. Appreciation of the beautiful would be a moral duty if it were not so natural an instinct. In our busy life and our earnest pursuit of practical goals we may well consider whether we are allowing to our soul that margin of leisure required for its enrichment through the ministries of nature and of art. With every common thorn-bush by the wayside aflame with God's revelation, it were a tragedy indeed to walk through life heedless and unaware.

✚

Scripture—He hath made everything beautiful in its time.—*Eccl. 3:11.*

Sing unto Jehovah, and give praise in the beauty of holiness.—*2 Chron. 20:21.*

✚

There is beauty in the forest
When the leaves are green and fair;
There is beauty in the meadow
Where the wild flowers scent the air;
There is beauty in the sunlight
And the soft blue sky above;
Oh, the world is full of beauty,
When the heart is full of love.

—W. L. SMITH ("Beauty.")

✚

Prayer—O Thou who hast given us the love of all that is beautiful, and so much that satisfies this instinct, we praise Thee for Thy goodness to us. May we be ready always to see the beauty in the world about us, and most of all in the lives of the men and women we know. May we understand that our happiness comes not from without but from within, and that the discovery of beauty in the world in which we live depends always upon our possession of that quality within our own souls. Grant us, then, the beauty of holiness. In Jesus' name.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*The Joy of Work.*

Delight in our daily task comes to us by both instinct and reflection. We are made for work. The most unhappy are those who have nothing to do. But it is possible greatly to enhance this natural joy in our work by reflection on the partnership that we have with God through our work. Our Lord tells us that God is a working God, and the apostle teaches us to think of ourselves as co-workers with Him. This lifts our task, however humble it may seem to be, into significance and dignity.

✚

Scripture—And thou shalt teach them the work that they shall do.—*Ex. 18:20.*

And the men did the work faithfully.—*2 Chron. 34:12.*

Every man also to whom God hath given to rejoice in his labor—this is the gift of God. *Eccl. 5:19.*

✚

I am glad a task to me is given,
To labor at day by day,
For it bringeth me health and strength and hope,
And I cheerfully learn to say,
Head, you may think, Heart, you may feel,
But Hand, you shall work alway.

—LOUISA M. ALCOTT
("A Song from the Buds.")

✚

Prayer—Among all Thy gifts, O God, we would not be ungrateful for our daily work. We are often weary, and think we should like to rest our tired bodies and minds. But we know how soon there comes back to us the need of the labor that keeps us in sympathy with all the world of effort and of hope. We thank Thee, dear Father, for our daily work. But we want always to do our work with the sense of Thy companionship. We should like to work with Thee at the good and great tasks of the kingdom of heaven. Make us co-laborers with God, and our lives shall be complete. —*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*Pathfinders for Christ.*

One of the thrilling privileges of the Christian life is found in the spiritual fellowship felt by each follower of our Lord with those heroic souls who carry the gospel to the far frontiers of the world. These missionaries of the cross are the forerunners of salvation; they clear the way for the kingdom of God; they plant the seeds of hope and faith amid the thick weeds of savagery and the unfruitful growths of heathen cults; and they open the way for realizing at last the spiritual unity of the whole human family. We should know their names, share their burdens, uphold their hands with our own sacrifices, and bear them up continually to God in our prayers.

✚

Scripture—Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.—*Mark 16:15.*

✚

O Missionaries of the Blood! Ambassadors of God!
Our souls flame in us when we see where ye have fearless trod
At break of day; your dauntless faith our slackened valor shames,
And every eve our joyful prayers are jeweled with your names.
—ROBERT McINTYRE ("The Missionaries.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we thank Thee for granting us a share in Thy gracious work of redeeming mankind. Responding to Thy love for us, we have come to know the blessing of Thy grace, and we wish with deep yearning to share Thy love with our brothers the whole world over. Kindle in our hearts some worthy vision of the glory of the earth when Jesus our Lord comes to be the king of all souls. Make us loyal to those who represent us and Thee on the far away fields of Christian conquest. Bless them and their loved ones and their treasures, and grant them some satisfying tokens of the ultimate triumph with which Thou shalt crown their self-sacrifice. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*The Lesson of the Lilies.*

In teaching us to put away anxiety from our soul our Lord found his example for us in the calmness and trust with which the flowers grow. They have no fear, but thrust their roots firmly into the warm soil and their tender petals into the hazards of day and night. The Father cares for them. And He cares for us, and could do so much more through us if in the midst of our work we could learn the fine art of trust and of dependence upon His will and love.

✚

Scripture—Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.—*Matt. 6:28, 29.*

✚

Consider thou the lilies,
O heart of mine, today;
They neither toil nor spin to soil
Their beautiful array;
I would that thou couldst live a life
So fearless sweet as they.

—MARGARET E. SANGSTER
("Consider the Lilies.")

✚

Prayer—O Thou in whom we live and move and have our being, teach us the lesson of calm and quiet trust that our Savior taught the disciples of old. Save us, we beseech Thee, from the worry that disturbs and weakens our lives. May we gain more of the confidence in God which was the joy of Jesus' life, and has been the secret of so many noble and triumphant careers. We would not abandon effort, but we would count it part of a life of trust in God. May our faith grow stronger as we come nearer to Thee in love and prayer. Through Christ Jesus our Lord.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*Daily Strength for Daily Needs.* Our fears and our anxieties make us unfair to God. When has He failed to supply our soul with the strength we needed for our task? And yet we keep on afflicting ourselves, and inhibiting the full play of our energies, and denying God's providential goodness, by anxious anticipation lest we be not sufficient for tomorrow's tasks. Both experience and faith should quiet our fears and free our efforts for today's duty, in the sure conviction that ample strength will be given for whatever duties lie farther on.

✚

Scripture—Only be thou strong and very courageous...for then shalt thou make thy way prosperous, and then shalt thou have good success. Have I not commanded thee? Be strong and of good courage, be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the Lord thy God is with thee, whithersoever thou goest.—*Josh. 1:7, 8, 9.*

✚

Be strong.
It matters not how deep entrenched the wrong,
How hard the battle goes, the day, how long;
Faint not, fight on: Tomorrow comes the song.
Be strong.

—MALTBIE D. BABCOCK
("Be Strong.")

✚

Prayer—Our gracious father, we give Thee humble and hearty thanks for Thy strength vouchsafed to us for our daily comfort and protection. We acknowledge Thy providence, which has brought us in safety to this holy day. May we accept it as one of the gifts of life by which we come to know thee as our Father and Friend? Grant us the wisdom and humility to go through this day's duties with the thought of Thy care and Thy will in our behalf. May we slight no duty, but accept all the labors of the day as a part of our divine calling and profession. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*The Answering God.*

In moods when doubts possess our soul and it is hard to believe in the reality of a responsive God who hears our prayer and heeds our wants and needs, it is well for us to try to imagine the opposite alternative. If there were no fatherly God, if all our yearning and aspirations struck against a sky of brass, if our only answer were an echo of our own cry—how false would life seem, how inextricably bewildered would our soul be! With all its difficulties, a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God is easier for our human reason to accept than no God at all, or an unresponsive God. The best answer to atheism is to test it; just as the best proof of faith is to try it out in faithful practice.

✚

Scripture—In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee; for thou wilt answer me.—*Psalm 86:7.*

Like as a father pitieth his children, so Jehovah pitieth them that fear him.—*Psalm 103:13.*

✚

Thou with strong prayer and very much entreating
Willest be asked, and thou shalt answer then;
Show the hid heart beneath creation beating,
Smile with kind eyes and be a man with men.

—F. W. H. MYERS ("St. Paul.")

✚

Prayer—When other helpers fail we come to Thee, Thou God of love, and we are never without answer to our call. With strong crying and tears have we made known our complaints unto Thee, and Thou hast listened to our cry. Thy fatherly care is over us. We are lifted up by Thy strong hand whenever we fall. Our times are in Thy hand, and we trust Thee to the end. Provide for us our daily task and our nightly rest, and safeguard us for Thy name's sake.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*Unceasing Vigilance.*

Life is never free from moral ambiguities. If there were by our side some spiritual monitor to tell us what course to choose, what decision to make, and to tell us with infallible authority, we could safely enough commit our soul to him and have done with the burden of moral solicitude. But there is no such infallible guide. Even our Lord who walks beside us leaves place for the play of our own intelligence and volition. He enjoins us to be alert of soul, sensitive to right and wrong, and to have a quick eye for truth and reality.

✚

Scripture—Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.—*Matt. 26:41.*

Beware of them that come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.—*Matt. 7:15.*

✚

Much remains
To conquer still; peace hath her victories
No less renowned than war; new foes arise,
Threatening to bind our souls with secular chains.
Help us to save free conscience from the paw
Of hireling wolves, whose gospel is their maw.

—JOHN MILTON ("To Cromwell.")

✚

Prayer—Holy Father, we thank Thee today for the new occasions that life brings to us. Each new day offers us its privileges and its work. Both are needed to make life complete. We desire to enter upon the experiences of this day with a due sense of Thy love and mercy that have kept us hitherto. We want to meet all the problems of the day with patience and courage. Our home relationships and our social plans we should like to have enriched by Thy presence and direction. Our business and our public life we would carry on as in the great Taskmaster's eye. So may we be led this day that when it shall come to its close we may count it a good day. For Jesus' sake.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*God's Love.*

Has the story of the love of God grown stale to our soul, so that we no longer thrill under it? Then let us listen anew to the wondrous recital as though we were hearing it for the first time. It will seem beautiful beyond anything that we have ever heard. To know that a heart of love beats at the center of our world, that our unregardful lives are encompassed by an infinite patience and pity and grace, is to possess a knowledge beyond the learning of sage and seer.

✚

Scripture—He careth for you.—*1 Pet. 5:7.*

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life. —*John 3:16.*

✚

Receive the good glad news again,
O heavy-laden sons of men;
Our Father will your burden bear,
Our Father will your sorrows share,
Because he loves you. Cold of heart
Are you to others? Do your part.
And thank Him thus. To your hearts take
Earth's sad ones for your Father's sake.
Because He loves you.

—MARIANNE FARNINGHAM
("Our Father Cares.")

✚

Prayer—Our Heavenly Father, we have read the story of Thy love to us in the gospel of Jesus our Lord. It seems wonderful past all believing. Surely Thou hast seen in us values which we should never discover in ourselves. May we accept Thy estimate of our lives rather than our own, and make the daily effort to complete Thy plans for us by Christly living and service. Especially may we give to others the joy of appreciation and good will which our Father has shown to us. And may we at all times seek the direction of the Holy Spirit, our Comforter and Friend.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*Hands of Healing.*

One of the tender ministries which our Christian civilization has stimulated, and which the world war has brought to a commanding place in the regard of the modern world, is that of nursing the sick, to which many thousands of consecrated women have devoted themselves. In this we are following the example of Jesus our Lord, who made healing the bodily ills of men a part of his divine mission. Sickness is a common experience, and the sympathy and tenderness which the prophets attributed to Jehovah, and which the people found in Jesus, the nurse and physician incarnate in our life today.

✣

Scripture—For I will restore health unto thee, and heal thee of thy wounds.—*Jer. 30:17.*

✣

Your fine white hand is Heaven's gift
To cure the wide world, stricken sore,
Bleeding at the breast and head,
Tearing at its wounds once more.

—VACHEL LINDSAY
("The Merciful Hand.")

✣

Prayer—We are happy, our good Father, in the joy which our holy faith has made possible, as the world moves onward under its influence to a nobler conception of service and good will. Bless, we beseech Thee, the helpful lives which provide ministries of healing for the sick and the suffering. For the skill and the self-denying devotion of physician and nurse we are deeply grateful, and we pray that we, too, in the measure of our ability, may be healers of the world's pain and sorrow. In the spirit of Jesus. —*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Rebuke of Folly.*

The usual and unruffled course of life offers many temptations to superficial souls to dispense with all concern for the things of the spirit. In such moments it is easy to dismiss God from the universe, and deem Him unnecessary to life and happiness. But from such complacency of denial there is certain to come soon or late the arousal of distress. Peril, disaster, sorrow and humiliation are sure to shake the foundations of unbelief and indifference. We may well be glad of any affliction that drives us back from our folly to Him.

✚

Scripture—The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.—*Psalm 53:1.*

Turn unto us again, O God, and cause Thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.—*Psalm 80:3.*

✚

The fool hath said...The fool hath said...
And we who deemed him wise,
We who believed that Thou wast dead,
How should we seek Thine eyes?

How would we seek to Thee for power,
Who scorned Thee yesterday?
How should we kneel in this dread hour?
Lord, teach us how to pray.

—ALFRED NOYES
("A Prayer in Time of War.")

✚

Prayer—Righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee. But to those who have seen Thy face in Jesus Thou hast become the great Necessity. Save as, we beseech Thee, from the mistake and sin of denying or forsaking Thee. May all our days, both the evil and the good, be occasions for a keener search for the tokens of Thy presence. And may prayer be our increasing source of strength. We ask in the spirit of Jesus.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*The Humbled Heart.*

There are times when we can come into the presence of God with a certain confidence, because we have thought upon His loving kindness and the friendship of His Son. There are other moments when our ill-desert has all but overwhelmed us with self-blame, and we hardly venture to lift our souls in prayer. But it may be that such humbling hours are a means of grace, for they strip us of assurance, and bring us very low before God, who then can lift us up in due season, and restore to us the joy of His salvation.

✚

Scripture — Hide not thy face from me; put not thy servant away in anger; thou hast been my help; cast me not off, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation. —*Psalm. 27:9.*

✚

I ask not for Thy love; nor e'en as much
As for a hope on Thy dear breast to lie;
But be Thou still my Shepherd — still with such
Compassion as may melt and such a cry;
That so I hear Thy Feet, and feel Thy touch,
And dimly see Thy face ere yet I die.

—GEORGE JOHN ROMANES ("Sonnet.")

✚

Prayer—Holy Father, we are conscious of sins that make us unworthy of Thy love. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have no worth that Thou shouldst accept us. Yet even in the midst of our ill-desert, we are made aware by Thy holy Word that if with all our hearts we truly seek Thee, we shall not seek in vain. Fulfill to us in this hour, we pray Thee, this gracious promise. We ask in Jesus' name.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*Waiting at the Ford.*

There is a certain appropriateness in thinking of death as a stream that separates us from the land of heart's desire. The story of ancient Israel tells us that only by divine help could the dividing river be crossed. Not otherwise is it in our own experience. There is One for whom we must wait at that great boundary, and whose strength alone is sufficient to help us over. If we can rely on His aid, all our doubts and dangers will be past.

✚

Scripture — It was a stream that I could not pass through, for the waters were a river.—*Ezek. 47:5.*

Let me go over, I pray thee, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan.—*Deut. 3:25.*

The Lord thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son.—*Deut. 1:31.*

✚

Lord, is it long that my spirit must wait?
Man of Nazareth, Christ for me!
Deep is the stream, and the night is late,
And grief blinds my soul that I cannot see.

Speak to me out of the silences, Lord,
That my spirit may know, as forward I go,
Thy pierc'd hands are lifting me over the ford!

—LAUCHLAN MACLEAN WAITT
("The Long, Last Mile.")

✚

Prayer—Very gently hast Thou led us, heavenly Father, through all the pilgrimage of our lives. Thou hast been to us a shepherd and guide, a guardian and friend. Forsake us not, we beseech Thee, when we come to the end. May we be willing to wait in confidence for Thee by the side of the river that rolls between us and the land of our hopes. And in Thine own good time bring us safely over, to the joy and the service of the better life.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*The End of War.*

The tragedy which rested upon the world in the convulsion of the great war has aroused all the peace-loving people to a sense of the world's peril as long as the spirit of ruthlessness and conquest stalks abroad. Very reluctantly at times have the self-governing lands turned from the arts and industries of peace to the stern necessity of war as the only means of repressing a brutal and vindictive foe — a foe that has made known its furious character not only as a menace to civilization, but an enemy of the human race. To subdue and discipline such an arrogant and cruel power is at such times the only means of ending war and bringing in an era of enduring peace.

✣

Scripture—Rebuke thou the wild beast of the reeds; scatter thou the peoples that delight in war.—*Psalm 68:30.*

Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.—*Isa. 2:4.*

✣

Tidal, King of Nations, the World is weary of strife;
We stand aghast by our engines, that wait the trumpet's call.
Must man be brute forever, and Hate be lord of Life
Nay! tho the midnight question, the morning answereth all.

—GEORGE STERLING ("Tidal, King of Nations.")

✣

Prayer—Our Father, all the hands of prophets and apostles in the past have pointed to a coming age of peace. Very sad are the lovers of righteousness when the sky is darkened by the clouds of war. Yet in such hours, when all pathways that lead to justice and freedom are closed save those that traverse the fields of conflict, help Thy children to choose the nobler road of suffering and sacrifice, and win through to peace with righteousness. We ask for Thy name's sake.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*The Image of God.*

The great lessons taught by the Hebrew story of creation are that whatever may have been the time or manner of the process, it was God who made the universe; and that man is in some essential fashion created in the likeness of the Eternal. There is in this assurance a humbling and yet ennobling pride. We have to be worthy of such a dower. We dare not prove recreant to the divine confidence. If time seems short to prove our worthiness of such honor, we have eternity. And the life of Jesus makes eternity evident beyond all doubting.

✚

Scripture—And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.—*Gen. 1:27.*

✚

Two of far nobler shape, erect and tall,
Godlike erect, with native honor clad,
In naked majesty seemed lords of all;
And worthy seemed; for in their looks divine,
The image of their glorious maker, shone
Truth, wisdom, sanctitude severe and pure.

—JOHN MILTON ("Paradise Lost.")

✚

Prayer—O Thou great Creator and Preserver of all things, we read with wonder the story of Thy work in nature as it is written in the records of the past, in the book of life about us, and in the Scriptures. In our own hearts we know in our best moments that we are made in Thy likeness. Whatever may have been the time or manner of our human beginnings, it is Thou who art our Maker. May we read the story of history with fresh appreciation of its divine character in the light of Thy relation to its origin and progress. And may we seek to realize for ourselves and our fellow-men something of Thy purpose for the race. In Christ's name.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*The Pursuit of the Highest Good.*

Great souls have always been unconquerable idealists. They believe that life is made for the good, the true, and the beautiful; and they count it all joy to endure whatever hardship is involved in bringing their vision to realization. This attitude is not inconsistent with a practical acceptance of things as they are, as a basis on which to build things as they ought to be. Only we must not lose our sense of discontent with the second best, but press on until our fairest visions, our highest ideals, shall have been wrought into the structure of reality.

✚

Scripture—Forgetting those things that are behind and reaching forth unto those things that are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.—*Phil. 3:13, 14.*

✚

Launch your vessel,
And crowd your canvas,
And, ere it vanishes
Over the margin,
After it, follow it,
Follow the Gleam!

—ALFRED TENNYSON
("Merlin and the Gleam.")

✚

Prayer—On this new day we come to Thee, gracious Father, to thank Thee for life and all the good it holds for us. Thou hast revealed to us a destiny far more wonderful than our utmost dreams could have pictured. Give us courage, we pray Thee, to fulfil this high purpose by obedience to Thy will, and consecration to the holy ends of life. Aid us in our endeavors after the best that the present and the future can bring. With spirit undismayed may we follow after the ideals of righteousness and true holiness, never losing sight of the light that leads us on. We ask for the sake of the Christ.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*The Inner Battle.*

In the hours of our highest and purest purposes, when we are most aware of God's presence and companionship, we are never fully free of the drag and gloom of a baser self which still keeps habitation in our breast. Just so each prodigal, following the impulses of his lower nature, is haunted, no doubt, on all his wanderings by the appeals of his truer self. We should avoid the delusion into which many have fallen, who hoped to overcome this inner tension by a system of forced introspection. There is danger here of morbidness and unreality. Nor is this our Lord's way. He bids us look to him and to the work he gives us to do, and assures us that this way lies the mastery of our higher self over the lower.

✚

Scripture—The flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh.—*Gal. 5:17.*

✚

I came out alone on my way to my tryst. But who is this that follows me in the silent dark?
I move aside to avoid his presence, but I escape him not.
He makes the dust rise from the earth with his swagger; he adds his loud voice to every word that I utter.
He is my own little self, my lord, he knows no shame; but I am ashamed to come to Thy door in his company.

—RABINDRANATH TAGORE ("Gitanjali.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, the sense of our need of Thy help is ever with us. Life is so much vaster than are our resources that unless Thou dost come with Thy wisdom and grace we shall fail of our desires. And how can we thank Thee enough for the richness of Thy provision for us! Thou hast given Jesus to us, in whose power we are able to do all things that we ought to do. Strengthen our purposes to surrender our inner life to the keeping of Christ, who is Thy revelation of what we ought to be.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Passing of Great Souls.*

There are certain lives so impressive that we can hardly think of their leaving the busy drama of the world without some unusual disarrangement in the order of things. But perhaps this is rather apparent than real, and every life, if we knew all the facts, is of profound importance in the eyes of God. Rather should we prefer to take this view, with the prophets and sages who spoke through the Scriptures, than to believe with modern pessimism that all alike go down into the dreamless dust. The great spirits who have passed this way make such cynicism impossible.

✚

Scripture—So Moses the servant of Jehovah died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of Jehovah. And he buried him in the valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor; but no man knoweth of his sepulchre even unto this day. —*Deut. 34:5, 6.*

✚

That was the grandest funeral that ever passed on earth;
But no man heard the tramping or saw the train go forth.
Noiselessly as the daylight comes when the night is done,
And the crimson streak on ocean's cheek grows into the great sun;
Noiselessly as the Springtime her crown of verdure weaves,
And all the trees on all the hills open their thousand leaves;
So, without sound of music, or voice of them that wept,
Silently down from the mountain's crown the great procession swept.

—MRS. C. F. ALEXANDER ("The Burial of Moses.")

✚

Prayer—Father of life and love, we look up to Thee today with wonder at the long way through which Thou hast led Thy children. Down the centuries Thou hast brought them, and the story of their journeyings is one continued message of Thy paternal care. One generation goes and another comes, but Thou art evermore the same. Thou buriest Thy workmen, but carriest on Thy work. Grant to us lives of fruitfulness and power. And at evening time may there be light.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*The Will of God.*

It has been the desire of all true souls that the divine purpose should be accomplished. Sometimes this is expressed in humble submission to what seems hard to bear. But at other times it is the cry of a militant and a cheering spirit. In both moods our Savior uttered the words, once in the garden and once in the Great Prayer. In this latter tone of trumpet-like defiance to evil we need at times to pray that same prayer, conscious that we can help to bring it to pass.

✚

Scripture—Thy will be done.—*Matt. 6:10; 26: 42.*

✚

Our faith springs like the eagle,
Who soars to meet the sun,
And cries exulting unto Thee,
O Lord, Thy will be done.

Thy will! It bids the weak be strong,
It bids the strong be just;
No lip to fawn, no hand to beg,
No brow to seek the dust.

Wherever man oppresses man
Beneath Thy liberal sun,
O Lord, be there, Thine arm made bare,
Thy righteous will be done.

—JOHN HAY ("HYMN.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, it is a joy to our souls to feel that in fulfilling our highest aspirations for personal goodness, and for the triumph of right in the world we are also participating in Thy plans for a nobler humanity. Conscious of this fact we would utter the words of the universal prayer only with the solemn interest of assisting in their realization. Then alone can we share Thy joy and Thy gracious designs. In Jesus' name we ask.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*Is It in Vain?*

It has been the burden of many great and sensitive souls in all the ages that they seemed to have labored to no purpose. Many a life has carried the conviction of a frustrate and unaccomplished task. We desire so much that, in the presence of our unrealized ideals, we are at times tempted to question if our labor is not in vain. This is true in the case of those seers and statesmen who have wrought for the cause of world peace, and whose hopes and labors seemed futile as they saw the world involved in the greatest war of history. But the world war has revealed the weakness of our plans for world peace, and instead of bringing discouragement, it has set all good souls at work on the task of brotherhood with new knowledge and unconquerable determination.

✚

Scripture—I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for naught and vanity; yet surely my judgment is with Jehovah, and my recompense with my God. —*Isa. 49:4.*

✚

It breaks his heart that kings must murder still,
That all his hours of travail here for men
Seem yet in vain. And who will bring white peace
That he may sleep upon his hill again?

—VACHEL LINDSAY.
("Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, save us from discouragement when the things we have labored to realize seem to fail of achievement. We have asked for peace, and war has come. We have asked for justice, and oppression survives. We have asked for greater strength and insight, and we seem to have missed the nobler objects for which we strove. And yet we believe that Thou wilt bring to pass our holiest purposes, and wilt enable us at last to see of the travail of our souls and be satisfied. May it indeed be so. In Jesus' name. —*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*The Dawn.*

The long struggle of the centuries for democracy and righteousness has seemed at times futile and impossible of success. But every age sees new advances. Old institutions that were planted across the pathway of the race are crumbling to pieces. It is the spirit of brotherhood which Jesus brought into the world to which this marvelous achievement must be credited. And he has vaster victories yet to gain.

✚

Scripture—The night is far spent and the day is at hand.—*Rom. 13:12.*

✚

Thrones are fallen; wisdom rules;
Foolish kings are kingly fools;
Royal pomp, which craved the sun,
Prostrate is as Babylon;
Love has come to power again;
Lo, the Christ stands — *let Him reign!*

—THOMAS CURTIS CLARK
("The Day Breaks.")

✚

Prayer—Dear Lord of our souls, we glorify Thee for all the tokens of Thine onward march through the centuries toward the goal of justice and righteousness. If at times the prospects seem dark, we have only to reanimate our wavering hopes with the survey of the long vista of progress in the past. We hope for ever better things, and we pledge ourselves as true friends of Jesus to put all our strength at his disposal for future triumphs.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*The Fire Bringers.*

The world has been lightened from point to point by great souls who, like Prometheus, brought the sacred flame of truth from its central source in God and made it in some small measure available to their fellow mortals. Such choice spirits have had to bring their sacred treasure with much sacrifice and toil. But the world has been made more beautiful by their devotion.

✚

Scripture—And they blew the trumpets, and broke the pitchers and held up the lamps.—*Judg. 7:20.*

He shall make his servants a flame of fire.—*Heb. 1:7.*

✚

Give thanks, O heart, for the high souls
That point us to the deathless goals—
For all the courage of their cry
That echoes down from sky to sky;
Thanksgiving for the armed seers,
And heroes called to mortal years—
Souls that have built our faith in man,
And lit the ages as they ran.

—EDWIN MARKHAM
("Conscripts of the Dream.")

✚

Prayer—Holy Father, for all true seekers after light we thank Thee. We have been blessed by that high endeavor, and have been put under obligation to add our efforts to theirs in the enlightening of the world. Save us, we beseech Thee, from contentment with small ideals. May we ever strive for the best—both for ourselves and for mankind. For this we know to be in accord with the mind of Jesus our Lord, in whose name we pray.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*The Daily Prayer.*

Even spirituality has its perils. It is possible for our soul in its moods of elevation to seek values that are abstract and transcendental, if not unreal. Our prayer habits should be guarded against such illusions, and all our aspirations kept rooted in the great common work-a-day values like those which our Lord's Prayer emphasized. Our daily bread, our moral integrity, a good will in our relation to our neighbors and associates, strength to meet our temptation, and the coming of the good kingdom of love amongst men—these should ever be the substance of our daily striving.

✣

Scripture—Give me neither riches nor poverty; feed me with the food that is needful for me.—*Prov. 30:8.*

Give us day by day our daily bread.—*Matt. 6:11.*

✣

I pray not that men tremble at
My power of place and lordly sway;
I only pray for simple grace
To look my neighbor in the face
Full honestly from day to day.

—JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY
("Ike Walton's Prayer.")

✣

Prayer—Lord of our lives, we often ask too much of Thee, and fail in thankfulness for what we have received. We do not mean to be ungrateful, but our wants are many, and it is hard to remember all that we have, when there is so much more that we seem to need. Give us first of all a sense of thankfulness for the mercies of each day. And then help us to understand that our real wants are few, after all, and that we only require enough for one day at a time. Teach us that if we keep this truth in mind, our wants will seem less great and insistent, and our possessions will seem multiplied past all our telling.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*Direct Approach to God.*

In our Christian faith no truth is more vital and precious than that which interprets God as directly accessible and responsive to each individual soul. Whatever value the church has, or the ministry, or the Bible—and their value is inestimable—it is not the value of an exclusive medium or channel of divine communication. These all are but interpreters of God, who keeps the pathway open for us to come directly into His presence whenever we will.

✣

Scripture—The God that made the world, and all things therein, he being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is he served by men's hands...seeing he himself giveth to all life and breath and all things.—*Acts 17:24, 25.*

✣

I thank thee, Sun! Thou hast a smile
That reaches to the heart, direct and sweet,
Without the ministries of scene and ceremonial.
Shine on these, all these in shivering need;
Shine on these, and teach them that the God
Of life and light dwells not alone
In temples made with hands, but that the path
To him from every soul, in every farthest
Corner of the earth, is as direct
As are thy rays to me.

—JOSIAH G. HOLLAND
("The Marble Prophecy.")

✣

Prayer—Thou, our eternal Father, art with us everywhere. We cannot escape from Thee, and we would not; for Thou lovest us with the love wherewith Thou lovest Christ. May the sense of Thy presence with us at every moment of our lives bring to us a great fear and a great joy. Thou art too holy to look upon sin; help us therefore to be pure. Thou art too tender not to pity the weak; be compassionate therefore when we miss the highest good. In Jesus' name.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Spirit of the Little Child.*

The best things in life come not to the sophisticated, the reserved and the cautious, but to those of childlike nature—the open-minded, the impressionable, the responsive. Our Savior observed that the priceless gift of the Kingdom—the chance of true friendship with God and man—came only to those of childlike spirit. He loved and studied children, and was impressed with their trustfulness, their fearlessness and their loyalty. We may well covet for ourselves the qualities that made children so much an object of his regard.

✣

Scripture—Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein.—*Mark 10:15.*

✣

Naked from out that far abyss behind us
We entered here:
No word came with our coming to remind us
What wondrous world was near,
No hope, no fear.

—EDWARD ROWLAND SILL
("The Future.")

✣

Prayer—Our Gracious Lord and Master, we come to Thee as little children, for as such we have come into the world, and as such Thou dost desire us evermore to come to Thee. In spite of all our strength, our skill and whatever degree of goodness we may have attained, we have the weakness, the ignorance and the folly of childhood. But Thou art a very loving Father, and we run to Thee when we find out our helplessness. Dear Lord, may the refuge of Thine arms be always a comfort to our souls, and may the evening hour find us ever ready to seek shelter and rest in that protection. We ask for Jesus' sake.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*Here—and There.*

The true life of faith and insight, the life that Jesus disclosed as a possibility for all his friends, has elements of freedom, serenity and power such as no other experience possesses. This is not the superiority of pride or arrogance, but of harmony with the spirit of the universe, which is the Spirit of God. If in this life such attainment is possible, what must be the outlook for the life in which the present limitations disappear? In comparison the present is as starlight to sunlight, as dream to reality.

✚

Scripture—Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. —*1 John 3:2.*

Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. —*1 Cor. 13:12.*

✚

What we, when face to face we see
The Father of our souls, shall be,
John tells us, doth not yet appear:
Ah! did he tell what we are here?

A mind for thoughts to pass into,
A heart for loves to travel through,
Five senses to detect things near,
Is this the whole that we are here?

—ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH
("Through a Glass Darkly.")

✚

Prayer—Our good Father, we are thrilled with the thought of the honor Thou hast shown us in calling us Thy children. We know that it is only because of Thy mercy and willingness to overlook our faults and weakness that we are named by Thy name. But we are inspired by this love of Thine to covet still higher glory day by day and in the life to come. It doth not yet appear what we shall be. There is no language to describe the unfolding glories of the life to be. But if we can attain the image of our Master, we shall be satisfied. In his name we pray.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Fear of the Lord.*

To fear God does not mean that we are to be afraid of Him, but that we are to stand in reverence before Him. God does not want servile or cringing adoration. But the true development of our soul is made possible only by the adoption of a true attitude toward its Creator and Father. Reverence is simply courtesy toward God, a courtesy that is no affectation of manner or posture, but the expression of a nature that is soundly and inwardly aware of God's spiritual dignity and power. Such reverence, such fear of the Lord, is indeed the beginning of wisdom.

✚

Scripture—O fear the Lord, ye his saints; for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.—*Psalm 34:9, 10.*

✚

> And O, be sure to fear the Lord alway!
> An' mind your duty, morn and night!
> Lest in temptation's path ye gang astray.
> Implore his counsel and assisting might;
> They never sought in vain that sought the Lord aright.
>
> —ROBERT BURNS
> ("The Cotter's Saturday Night.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. On this holy day we lift our hearts to Thee in gratitude for all Thy tender mercies. Thou hast not left us without the daily proofs of Thy loving care. May we give to Thee the worship and the reverence which are Thy due. We would fear before Thee with holy joy, and rejoice with trembling in Thy sanctuary. May we devote this day to Thy service, and find our true happiness in the fulfillment of Thy will. We ask in Jesus' name.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day— Living Joyously.

A kind of asceticism still inheres in the average Christian consciousness. It is no doubt a survival from those stern times when men supposed the impulses and joys of natural life were to be repressed in the interest of religion. Again and again it needs to be affirmed that Christianity is a religion of joy and gladness and good cheer. Our Lord himself has left us the example of a soul uninhibited by ascetic repression, glad, sociable, thoroughly normal, and radiant with the cheer that even his profound compassion for human woe could not destroy.

✚

Scripture—Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, rejoice.—*Phil. 4:4.*

✚

> And vague desires, like fitful blasts of balm
> To one that travels quickly, made the air
> Of Life delicious, and all kinds of thought,
> That verged upon them sweeter than the dream
> Dreamed by a happy man, when the dark East,
> Unseen, is brightening to his bridal morn.
>
> —ALFRED TENNYSON
> ("The Gardener's Daughter.")

✚

Prayer—Our good Father, our true and constant Friend, at the remembrance of all Thy mercy to us we feel the depth of our ingratitude, for many times we are wholly unmindful of Thy blessing, and think of the good things of life as the proper rewards of our own effort. Make us to know how dependent we are upon Thee, O Lord, for even the least of the blessings that fall to us. Most of all, grant us the disposition and will to enjoy the blessings Thou dost send us daily. We know that it lies within us to find every day wonderful with happiness, or clouded with discontent. Bestow upon us the cheerful heart that accepts with thankfulness the mercies of the day.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*The Value of Hardship.*

There is a subtle vice which has stolen into our age of the world as the result of our marvelous mastery of nature, and the conveniences which that mastery has made possible. We have grown afraid of hardship and suffering. We shun difficulties because we dislike all forms of suffering. But this is neither heroic nor Christian. One of the terrible by-products of war is the lesson that some of the dearest possessions are to be gained only at the price of great sacrifice. May we be saved from self-pity and cowardly evasion of duty.

✚

Scripture—Thou, therefore, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.—*2 Tim. 2:3.*

✚

Then welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bid's nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three-parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!

—ROBERT BROWNING
("Rabbi Ben Ezra.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father in heaven, kind and loving art Thou to all who wait upon Thee. We have found Thee ever mindful of our needs, and indulgent toward our requests. Yet we know that our prayers are too often for the smooth and easy things of life, when we really need the discipline of hardship for the development of our character and courage. May we not forget the gracious example of our Lord, who was made perfect through suffering. And may we comfort ourselves in every way of trouble with the joy of Thy companionship, and the grace of patient conquest of evil in the strength that is from above. We ask this in the name of Christ.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*The Inspiration of Love.*

The root of all life's joy and heroism and deft workmanship is love. In love is the spring of all our worthy endeavor. It is love that gives spontaneity to duty, that keeps conscience clear of confusing casuistries, and that shows us the reward of all our labor in the labor itself, and in the thing done, rather than in any prize that is awarded us from without. Love makes life incandescent. Under its divine spell all things glow with worthful purpose, and even a common bush by the road-side flames up with the presence of the Eternal.

✚

Scripture—And Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.—*Gen. 29:20.*

✚

Ah, how skillful grows the hand
That obeyeth Love's command!
It is the heart, and not the brain,
That to the highest doth attain,
And he who followeth Love's behest
Far excelleth all the rest.

—HENRY W. LONGFELLOW
("The Building of the Ship.")

✚

Prayer—Righteous Father, Thou hast set the solitary in families, and provided for the sons of men those associations which love makes holy, and time brings to richest fullness. We thank Thee for the domestic love which has made our homes possible. Very wonderful seems the way in which Thou hast led us to these relations which have sanctified our lives. Through happiness and sorrow the love that enriches our days has grown. Continue Thy blessing upon our love, we beseech Thee, and may it grow fuller and truer as the day lengthens to its close. We ask in Jesus' name.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*The Best Things Are Free.*

After all is said about the inequalities of life and its inequities, it remains to be considered that the really important and vital things of life are accessible to all. The air and water, the flowers and the stars, what food our bodies really need, good health, and a chance to work and love—these earthly goods are, with virtual universality, amply open to every soul. And the eternal treasures of the spirit are freest of all: the forgiveness of our sin, the rich, treasures of hope, the companionship of Christ—all are gifts which God freely gives to those who ask Him.

✠

Scripture—Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not? Harken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.—*Isa. 55:2.*

✠

For a cap and bells our lives we pay,
Bubbles we buy with a whole soul's tasking,
'Tis heaven alone that is given away,
'Tis only God may be had for the asking.

—JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.
("The Vision of Sir Launfal.")

✠

Prayer—Into Thy hands we commit ourselves afresh, Thou Father of mercies. We thank Thee for the new day, and its opportunities for work, for worship and for happiness. Thou art teaching us in the passing of the days that the things Thou givest us are the best. We waste too much of our time in striving after things that can neither satisfy nor endure. Help us to make more of Thy free gifts of health, joy, friendship, service, and the companionship of God. No day can be lost that is filled with these good things, and they all may be had for the taking. Accept our praise, and care for our souls, we pray in the name of the Christ.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*God's Witness to All Men.*

Because our Bible sprung from the Hebrew people and emphasizes especially their national interests, experiences and faith, we must guard our mind against the assumption that God spoke no word of revelation to any other people. Quite the contrary is true, as the Bible itself teaches. Our God is not a tribal God. He has no special favorites among the nations. And while the ancient Hebrews responded more fully to His self-disclosures than any other people, He found witnesses everywhere. All partial witnesses to God find their correction and fulfillment in Jesus our Lord.

✚

Scripture—In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land. Whom the Lord of hosts shall bless saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.—*Isa. 19:24, 25.*

✚

God sends his teachers unto every age,
To every clime, and every race of men,
With revelations fitted to their growth
And shape of mind, nor gives the realm of Truth
Into the selfish rule of one sole race;
Therefore each form of worship that hath swayed
The life of man, and given it to grasp
The master-key of knowledge, reverence,
Enfolds some germs of goodness and of right.

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we learn of the richness of Thy nature and the wonder of Thy love through the story of the past. Thou hast been good to all, and Thy tender mercies have been over all Thy works. We love only a few people, and find it difficult to think that God loves all. Even those who knew Thee best in ancient days could not understand Thy love for all. Help us to share something of Thy all-embracing love. In the spirit of Jesus.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*The Challenge of the Martyrs.*

Dull indeed must our soul be if it thrills not when the roll of martyrs is called. All our treasures, both those of the outer world of matter and the inner world of the spirit, have been bought for us by the shedding of blood. Our faith, our freedom, our knowledge, our creature comforts—when we count over our treasures how few of them have we earned for ourselves! By war, by persecutions, by ingenious devices of malice and prejudice, brave souls have suffered that we might be enriched.

✚

Scripture—And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea moreover of bonds and imprisonments. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins, and in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy.
—*Heb. 11:36-38.*

✚

One in fire, and two in field,
Their belief with blood have seal'd.
Dying as their father died,
For the God their foes denied;
Three were in a dungeon cast,
Of whom this wreck is left the last.

—GEORGE GORDON BYRON
("The Prisoner of Chillon.")

✚

Prayer—O Thou great Author of Life and Revealer of Truth, we come to understand how much life and truth are worth by the knowledge of what they have cost. Thou hast given us Thyself that we may be born of the heavenly race and brought up as sons of God. And Thou hast given us great examples of noble living and cruel dying that the truth might be kept free for our possession. Help us to make some noble use of the source sought out for us by those heroic spirits that watch the progress of our lives from the high seats of heaven. And may we too be counted worthy to suffer for the sake of Christ.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*Thinking on the Great Themes.*

It is probable that not many modern men and women think as deeply or broadly as their capacity would allow. Yet thinking is a duty. And thinking on the deeper things of life is a duty. To fill the heart with thoughts noble and pure, and to train the mind to seek out the meanings of God's Word and His providence, is not a privilege for the few, but an obligation and a virtue for all souls who take life earnestly.

✚

Scripture—Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.—*Phil. 4:8.*

✚

Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme,—
How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed;
How He, who bore in heaven the second name,
Had not on earth whereon to lay his head;
How His first followers and servants sped;
The precepts sage they wrote to many a land;
How He, who lone on Patmos banished,
Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand,
And heard great Bab'lon's doom pronounced by heaven's command.

—ROBERT BURNS
("The Cotter's Saturday Night.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, from whom we receive all the gifts of life, accept, we pray Thee, the gratitude of souls that have known the consolations of Thy grace and the promises of the fulness of life; We bring our lives to Thee today for fresh consecration to the high ends of the kingdom of God. We would enter upon the work and worship of this week with the sense of Thy companionship, and without fear or distrust. Grant us, we beseech Thee, the peace which comes only to those who have laid hold upon the great truths of our holy faith, and made them their own. For Jesus' sake.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*Sweetheart and Wife.*

Among the many motives for loyalty to high ideals none is more inspiring to the masculine nature than the loving companionship of woman. Beginning as mutual attachment, love ripens into the richest of spiritual obligations. It calls forth from the lover's soul all the moral chivalry of which he is capable, to make life worthy of the beloved. To keep this chivalric impulse alive, to guard it against the drag of the commonplace and the sordid, and to soften it with all the tendernesses with which experience is shot through, is to find not only the secret of happiness, but a sure anchor for rectitude and character.

✚

Scripture—And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel, thy younger daughter. —*Gen. 29:18.*

Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest, all the days of thy life.—*Eccl. 9:9.*

✚

Behold her there,
As I beheld her ere she knew my heart,
My first, last love; the idol of my youth,
The darling of my manhood, and, alas!
Now the most blessed memory of mine age.

—ALFRED TENNYSON
("The Gardener's Daughter.")

✚

Prayer—Holy Father, Thou hast given us all that makes life sweet and inspiring. We thank Thee for life and health, and for the proper vocations to which we have been called. But with these other blessings we also rank the bestowal of those whose love has been our chief aid in the work of the years, and whose inspiration has made possible the best things we have been able to do. Make us worthy of their companionship and trust. Bless our efforts to make life beautiful for their sakes. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*America's Ideals.*

America has been called of God to a luminous and beneficent leadership among the nations. Without disprizing the part which great and illustrious sister peoples have taken in the advancement of the race, we are justly proud that our own nation seems increasingly to be the enlightener of the nations, the beautiful pioneer in the vanguard of the world's progress. With malice toward none, with charity for all, it is ours to widen the circle of civilization, to lift the levels of national and international morality, and to dispense to the ends of the earth the ideals of the Christian faith.

✚

Scripture—And I will make of thee a nation greater and mightier.—*Num. 14:12.*

✚

Thou, too, sail on, O Ship of State!
Sail on, O Union, strong and great!
Humanity with all its fears,
With all the hopes of future years,
Is hanging breathless on thy fate!
Sail on, nor fear to breast the sea!
Our hearts, our hopes, are all with thee,
Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears,
Our faith triumphant o'er our fears,
Are all with thee—are all with thee!

—HENRY W. LONGFELLOW
("The Building of the Ship.")

✚

Prayer—God of our land, and Keeper of our destinies, we adore Thee for the place in which Thou hast set us, for the institutions which we enjoy, and for the national ideals and hopes which are ours. Through storm and sunshine, through peace and war we have been granted Thy protection. We praise Thee for the high purposes that have filled the minds of the men who have wrought at the tasks of the state. Give us ever such leaders as those whose names we most cherish in our history. And may Thy Word be the rock on which the Republic rests. We ask in the divine name. —*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*Gift and Giver.*

Our gifts express the quality of our soul. A fine nature has a certain "knack" of gift-selection, and a deftness in conveying a gift which invests it with the very spirit of the giver. This holds true whether the gift be grand or simple, a token or a contribution. And after all, that is what our friends need most—not things, but ourselves. It is what the many enterprises for human betterment need most—not our money only, but our intelligence and our spiritual cooperation.

✠

Scripture—But the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth.—*Psalm 37:21.*

Then Peter said, silver and gold have I none; but such as I have, give I unto thee.—*Acts 3:6.*

✠

There is no alms which the hand can hold;
He gives nothing but worthless gold
Who gives from a sense of duty;
But he who gives but a slender mite,
And gives to that which is out of sight,
That thread of the all-sustaining Beauty
Which runs through all and doth all unite,—
The hand cannot clasp the whole of his alms,
The heart outstretches its eager palms,
For a god goes with it and makes it store
To the soul that was starving in darkness before.

—JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL
("The Vision of Sir Launfal.")

✠

Prayer—Father of our souls, Thou God of mercy and of grace, out of the abundance of Thy nature Thou hast ever bestowed upon us the richest favors. But beyond all that Thou dost bestow there is Thyself, whom most of all we need. May we also learn the secret of giving, so that our kindness to others may be no formal and calculated alms, but the real gift of personal interest and good will. We ask in the name of Thy great Gift to us.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*The Whole Day Through.*

Our prayer activity and our faith activity reach far beyond the narrow span of our consciousness. We are taught to pray without ceasing. But manifestly this does not mean that we are to keep our soul continually in a conscious attitude of prayer. This would leave us no chance to do our work. But it is possible so to pray and so to trust that the conscious spiritual act will reach down into our sub-conscious life, and continue active there, even while our consciousness is directed to the practical side of our daily duties. Thus our whole day may be one of praise and communion with God.

✚

Scripture—Evening and morning and at noon will I pray.—*Psalm 55:17.*

✚

The mountain that the morn doth kiss
Glad greets its shining neighbor;
Lord, heed the homage of our bliss,
The incense of our labor.

Sharp smites the sun like burning rain,
And field and flower languish;
Hear, Lord, the pleading of our pain,
The passion of our anguish.

Now the long shadows eastward creep,
The golden sun is setting;
Take, Lord, the worship of our sleep,
The praise of our forgetting.

—RICHARD WATSON GILDER
("Morning, Noon and Evening.")

✚

Prayer—Gracious God, this day comes to us from Thee, with its mystery and its promise. We do not know what it may bring to us, but may all of its hours be spent with Thee. We should like to grow into such intimacy with Thee that every act is worship, and all speech is prayer. May the morning, the noontime and the evening alike be spent in work and study and recreation which Thou canst approve, and may the night bring us peace.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*One Hour of Watching.*

The Christian life is a life of constant and steady companionship with our Lord and of service in his name. In all this it is not his will that the regular habits of our normal living should be interrupted. But there come crisis hours, great occasions when the Master trusts us to rise with him into service of especial strenuousness. Then he calls us to exercise extraordinary devotion, to go with him into the garden, and to keep watch while he wrestles through to victory. When our Lord thus honors us with the high demands of his friendship, shall we fail him?

✚

Scripture—And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What! could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. —*Matt. 26:40, 41.*

✚

Could ye not watch with me one hour?
Deep pain was in Thy voice
That day. Jesus, have men still power
To grieve Thee, or rejoice?
Then is Thy joy this day fulfilled,
Christ of Gethsemane!
For everywhere hearts Thou hast stilled
Keep wakeful watch with Thee.

—MARIANNE FARNINGHAM
("Without Ceasing.")

✚

Prayer—Good Master, Thou hast set us to the task of watching with thee all the hours of life. We need to be mindful of ourselves at each moment, and Thou too art in need of that constancy of affection and devotion which alone can complete the fine service of loyalty from day to day. May no lethargy come over our souls as we tarry for Thy coming. And may we feel that Thou art still the Savior of souls as in the past, and that our friendship with Thee is never dimmed by any evil way. In Thy holy name. —*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*The Unseen Master.*

In our reflections on the beautiful gospel story there ofttimes mingles with our thoughts the wistful desire that we might have stood with the first disciples and known our Lord as they knew him in the flesh. To have seen his face, to have felt the steadying touch of his hand, above all, to have heard his own voice speak the words of life—this it seems to us would be joy ineffable. But if we will accept it, there has been kept for us the deeper blessing of knowing our Lord by faith, walking by his side in simple trust, and then, in the character that his grace has formed in us, waking at last in his likeness to see him as he is. And this we shall see in the end is far better.

✝

Scripture—Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.—*1 Peter 1:8, 9.*

✝

Strong Son of God, immortal Love,
Whom we, that have not seen thy face,
By faith and faith alone embrace,
Believing where we cannot prove.

—ALFRED TENNYSON
("In Memoriam.")

✝

Prayer—O Lord, we praise Thee for the love wherewith Thou hast loved us, even while we were yet sinners. In tender compassion Thou hast come forth to meet us, even a very long way, and hast welcomed us back to the Father's house, where there is bread enough and to spare. Help us to abide in faith, as seeing Him who is invisible, and to set our affection upon things that are eternal. We bring this week to its close with the remembrance of Thy mercy to us, and we ask that in the time to come Thou wilt still walk with us to the journey's end. For Jesus' sake.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Communion in Daily Life.*

There is no ministry of our holy religion more precious to us than the service of Communion, in remembrance of our Lord. Yet we are well aware that it was no part of Jesus' purpose to make it a ritual or sacrament. It was to him a beautiful suggestion of that life of fellowship and sympathy which all his followers were to share with him. For that reason all gracious and beneficent ministries have a eucharistic value; and without a spirit of love and helpfulness, the Communion service would be of little worth to any soul.

✚

Scripture—The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ?...seeing that we who are many are one bread, one body.—*1 Cor. 10:16, 17.*

But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed came where he was; and when he saw him he was moved with compassion, and came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on them oil and wine. —*Luke 10:33, 34.*

✚

The Holy Supper is kept, indeed,
In whatso we share with another's need:
Not what we give, but what we share,—
For the gift without the giver is bare;
Who gives himself with his alms feeds three,
Himself, his hungering neighbor, and Me.

—JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL
("The Vision of Sir Launfal.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father who art in heaven, on this the day made sacred by so many inspiring events in the history of the faith, and most of all by the resurrection of our Savior from the dead, we come to Thee with joy and confidence, for Thou hearest us always. Accept the offering of gratitude which we make to Thee. Fill our souls with love and purity, with kindness, and with Thyself, and may our inward estate of faith and good will find due expression in our communion with our Lord and his people.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*The Pure in Heart.*

Inner purity and rectitude are sources of both insight and power. Of power, because the soul cannot fling its full energy into its problems and tasks if there is shame within the breast. Of insight, because a restless conscience blurs the mind's vision, and truth cannot find its way to the soul. To a guilty heart faith in God is hard, but a heart that is sound and clean responds as by instinct both to the fact and the presence of the Father.

✚

Scripture—Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.—*Matt. 5:8.*

✚

Thrice blest whose lives are faithful prayers,
Whose loves in higher love endure;
What souls possess themselves so pure,
Or is there happiness like theirs?

—ALFRED TENNYSON
("In Memoriam.")

✚

Prayer—Holy and righteous Father, Giver of life, and the Author of all our well-being, in the multitude of Thy tender mercies we find ourselves amazed and overwhelmed, for we have not merited the abundance of Thy favor. But in the life and work of our Lord we have seen Thy grace and mercy made manifest to all men, and we are brought very low in our sense of ill-desert before Thee. Yet we ask, most merciful Father, that Thou wilt pardon our offenses, and give to us in fuller measure the blessing of the pure heart, which brings us near to Thee. And may we see the shining of Thy face in our daily lives, and hereafter in the everlasting life.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*Sea Glimpses.*

Human life is a profound mystery, matched only in its unsearchableness by the life of God. Our soul is inscrutable in its origin and destiny. From the great deep to the great deep we go. Backward our gaze cannot pierce into the shadows. It is only as we look ahead that we can catch glimpses of the shining sea toward which, with God's help, we make our way. And the profoundest intuitions of our soul, the voice of God within, confirm the promises of holy men in the past that ere long we shall arrive in those holy realms where the saints have found their rest and their reward.

✚

Scripture—And I saw as it were a glassy sea mingled with fire; and them that came off victorious, standing by the glassy sea, having harps of God.—*Rev. 15:2.*

Yonder is the sea, great and wide.—*Psalm 104:25.*

✚

Hence in seasons of calm weather,
Though inland far we be,
Our souls catch sight of that immortal sea,
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

—WILLIAM WORDSWORTH
("Ode on Immortality.")

✚

Prayer—O Lord, our God, we wait for Thy blessing, without which all our lives are famished and unsatisfied. Thou hast loved us with an everlasting love, and called us into the covenants of Thy grace through faith in Jesus Christ our Lord. In his name, therefore, we beseech the favor of our common requirements day by day, of health and happiness, and the privilege of working with Thee at the great tasks of the kingdom of God. Grant us this day the vision of the King in his beauty, and of the sea of divine grace that rolls onward to the throne of God.
—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*The Love of God.*

Of all the intellectual problems belonging to religion none makes greater difficulty for our human reason than to believe that a gracious and loving God dwells at the heart of life. To believe that a being of vast power and vast wisdom dwells there is not so hard. It is Jesus who lights the candle of our faith in the love of God, and keeps it burning steadily and with sure conviction. In his presence the love of God becomes understandable, becomes, one might say, unescapable. Doubt cannot abide the benignant light of his personality.

✚

Scripture—The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee. —*Jer. 31:3.*

✚

I say to thee, do thou repeat
To the first man thou mayest meet
In lane, highway, or open street—

That he and we and all men move
Under a canopy of love,
As broad as the blue sky above.

—RICHARD CHENEVIX TRENCH
("The Kingdom of God.")

✚

Prayer—Holy and righteous God, the Giver of good and the Preserver of our souls, we have hardly dared to trust the blessed news brought to us in Thy holy Word, for it seems far beyond the reach of thought that we should be called the sons of God. Yet so convincing is that message made to us in the life and teaching of our Savior that we dare not doubt its truth. And when we look with fuller care into the volumes of divine record and of human experience, we are left in no uncertainty, for Thy love to us is everywhere made clear. Keep us ever in that love, we pray in Jesus' name.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*Conscience.*

It will help us to understand our true relation to God if we think of Him as approaching our soul not so much from the outside as from the inner side of our personality. We should not think of Him as merely another object among the many objects of our world, but as the very innermost reality of our own being, speaking to us through all the natural channels of our mind, our heart and our will. If we think of Him thus we shall know what conscience is: it is the divine presence in our soul urging us to live up to the best that we know, rebuking us when we do evil and disturbing our inner peace until we yield our will to the righteous will of God.

✚

Scripture—And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.—*Acts. 24:16.*

✚

Judge me not as I judge myself, O Lord!
Show me some mercy, or I may not live;
Let the good in me go without reward;
Forgive the evil I may not forgive.

—WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS ("Conscience.")

✚

Prayer—We praise Thee, O God. We acknowledge Thee to be the Lord. To Thee all angels cry aloud in ceaseless adoration. To Thee cherubim and seraphim continually do cry, Holy, holy, holy. The goodly fellowship of the prophets praise Thee. The holy company of the apostles praise Thee. The martyrs of all the years lift up their voices to Thee. We would unite our praise with that of this vast throng, and confess Thy glory. Do Thou aid us to be worthy of such companionship. Give us minds that are set on the noblest things, and consciences void of offence toward God and man. We ask in Jesus' name.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Sufficiency of Christ.*

If we have any doubt in our soul as to the power of Christ to do for us what he offers to do, it is a sure sign that we have not yet given him a fair chance to demonstrate his power. For the confident testimony of all men who have taken him at his word and yielded their wills to him, is that he more than suffices for all human need. In our weakness his strength is our victory, in our inexperience and ignorance the pathway marked by his foot-prints always leads us to peace, and in our sinfulness his grace opens up fountains within the soul which cleanse and save.

✚

Scripture—And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.—*2 Cor. 12:9.*

✚

Christ! I am Christ's, and let the name suffice you;
Ay, for me too He greatly hath sufficed.
Lo, with no winning words I would entice you;
Paul has no honor and no friend but Christ.

Yes, through life, death, through sorrow and through sinning
He shall suffice me, for He hath sufficed;
Christ is the end, for Christ was the beginning,
Christ the beginning, for the end is Christ.

—F. W. H. MYERS ("St. Paul.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we give Thee humble and hearty thanks for Thine infinite favor to us, for our daily comforts and well being, for the means of grace and for the hope of glory. In the fulness of Thy provision for us we find every want supplied. But beyond all the daily blessings we receive, we praise Thee for our Savior, Jesus Christ the Lord. In his name we ever come to Thee, and coming, find Thee ready to receive. Accept our praise for the mercies of this day, and go with us in the days to come, until we see Thee face to face.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*God's Many Voices.*

The habit of listening for God's voice is the basis and secret of spiritual insight. He speaks to us in many ways. His meanings and purposes are implicit in all our experiences. The attentive and expectant soul will hear Him speaking in conscience, in a good book, in a little child, in friendship, in sorrow, in bereavement, in a business reverse, in an unexpected duty, in a cry of need, in the routine work, and in the silence when other voices are dumb. We should not think of God's communication as accompanying only some extraordinary event, but our soul may learn to hear Him in all the orderly on-going of life.

✚

Scripture—The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thundereth; the Lord is upon many waters.—*Psalm 29:3.*

✚

Not by one portal or one path alone
God's holy messages to men are known;
Waiting the glances of His awful eye,
Silver-winged seraphs do Him embassy,
And stars, interpreting His high behest,
Guide the lone foot, and glad the falling breast.
The rolling thunder and the raging sea
Speak the stern purpose of the Deity,
And storms beneath and rainbow hues above
Herald His anger and proclaim His love.

✚

Prayer—Our heavenly Father, the whole of creation speaks of Thy power and Thy goodness. There is no voice in all the universe, save that of unthankful men, that does not proclaim Thy praise. We would join in this great chorus of thanksgiving, and count ourselves among those grateful beings to whom the glory of God is an ever-present theme. Help us to learn more fully the happy secret of the world, and be able to tell it to all whose lives we can direct for good. For Jesus' sake.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Tree of Life.*

It is an impressive aspect of the creation narrative that the source of enduring life was placed in a mysterious tree in the midst of the garden of Eden. It is at least the suggestion that if temptation could be met with resistance, and life could take evermore the fairer form of purity and nobleness, it would be inevitable that it would endure. As it is in this world, and perhaps in any world of moral option, life must be won by struggle, and immortality is less a possession than an achievement.

✚

Scripture—And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden: and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the Lord God caused to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden. —*Gen. 2:8, 9.*

✚

In this pleasant soil
His far more pleasant garden God ordained:
Out of the fertile ground He caused to grow
All trees of noblest kind for sight, smell, taste;
And all amid them stood the tree of life,
High eminent, blooming ambrosial fruits
Of vegetable gold.

—JOHN MILTON ("Paradise Lost.")

✚

Prayer—Righteous God, the Giver and Sustainer of life, we read in the book of nature and in the Book of Holiness the story of Thy creative work. Thou hast made man in Thine own likeness, and given to him all the means of comfort and of growth. But most of all hast Thou placed in his garden the Tree of Life. Gracious Father, may no lesser pleasures rob us of the dower of life. And may we learn the secret of the inner way, that shall bring us to the Tree of Life whose roots take hold upon the foundations of the world, and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. We pray in Jesus' name.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*The Help of Prayer.*

If prayer did no more than lift us to nobler heights from which we could take truer and farther-reaching views of our life, it would fully justify itself. What our soul needs is perspective, horizon. For most of us there is no sky. Our minds are bent down to immediate interests and tasks, and there is no unifying, interpretative, enlightening vision. But prayer lifts our hearts toward the hills, and the quiet and mighty stars, and so draws our daily tasks and interests into a wider perspective. Thus life is filled with new worth and glory. This, of course, is but the subjective side of prayer. In addition, we know that prayer actually pierces the husk of reality and reaches the living Heart of love that abides there.

✚

Scripture—O Thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.—*Psalm 65:2.*

✚

No help but prayer,
A breath that fleets beyond this iron world,
And touches Him that made it.

—ALFRED TENNYSON ("Harold.")

✚

Prayer—O God, our Help in ages past, our Hope for years to come, we take refuge with Thee from the troubles of life, and from the scorn of the world. In Thee is life and peace. Our days are clouded, but the sunlight is Thine own. Our joys are shaded, but the perfect smile belongs to Thee. Teach us the secret of close companionship with Thee. We would have no day pass onward without its season of prayer. And yet we would not count that prayer alone which frames itself in human speech. Help us to make all our moments prayerful with the sense of Thy presence and love. Then all work will be prayer, and all enjoyment praise. Into this inner sanctuary of Thy mercy take us for all the days of this week. For Thy name's sake.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*Life's Building.*

The sense of the solidity and finality of character is conveyed to us when we conceive of life under the imagery of a growing building. The spiritual structure of our inner life rises into proportions of symmetry and beauty through our daily putting into practice the ideals our Lord gave us. All our deeds, our thoughts, and the imaginations of our hearts are the solid materials with which the temple of our soul is builded. Through the law of habit these all find their permanent places in our character.

✚

Scripture—Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man who built his house upon the rock.—*Matt. 7:24.*

But let each man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. —*1 Cor. 3:10.*

✚

For the structure that we raise,
Time is with materials filled;
Our todays and yesterdays
Are the blocks with which we build.

—HENRY W. LONGFELLOW
("The Builders.")

✚

Prayer—Our divine and merciful Father, all the springs of life and blessing are in Thee. We thank Thee for the new day, that comes to us out of the treasury of Thy goodness, and bears upon its breast the lesson of Thy glory. In it we mean to do something worthy of Thee and of our own estate as the children of God. May the rich materials of time and opportunity which are put into our hands for daily use be well employed in the rearing of the structure of character. We would make no mistake in the building we are fashioning, for we have only a short time in which to work at the task, and its purposes are eternal. Therefore we ask for Thy direction and blessing. In Jesus' name.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*Life's Sowing.*

Life is so fertile, so responsive to our acts and influence! Sometimes we complain of the hardness, the barrenness, the unyieldingness of life. But deeper reflection shows us that in innumerable subtle ways we are scattering seeds every-whither that are destined to bring forth inevitable harvest. This marvelous fertility of our environment should cause sober inquiry within our soul as to the character of the influence that proceeds from us. Are our associates, those who see us in our unself-conscious actions, drawn upward by us? Do they hold truth and gentleness and purity in greater respect because of the example of our deportment?

✣

Scripture—In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand.—*Eccl. 11:6.*

Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters.—*Isa. 32:20.*

✣

Go, speed the stars of Thought
On to their shining goals,—
The sower scatters abroad his seed;
The wheat thou strew'st be souls.

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON ("Harvests.")

✣

Prayer—Our heavenly Father, Thou hast taught us in Thy holy Word that all life is a field in which we sow the seeds of our own choosing. We thank Thee for the liberty of this work, and the privilege of making the harvest what we will under Thy blessing. We confess with shame that we are not always careful to choose the good seed of the kingdom, and sometimes our sowing is in the soil of the flesh rather than the spirit. Yet we would not forget that the reaping is certain; from the one corruption, and from the other life eternal. Grant us the earnestness of the Great Sower in our work, and such a harvest as shall bring us joy. For Thy name's sake.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*The Soul's Adventure & Reward.*

Experience derives much of its inspiration from the principle of adventure with which our whole life is shot through. Drawn by hope and faith, we are all explorers, seeking new worlds, new knowledge, new treasures. To keep the spirit of progress, of discovery, alive in our heart is the secret of abiding youthfulness and continual attainment.

✚

Scripture—And he went out, not knowing whither he went...For he looked for the city which hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God.—*Heb. 11:8, 10.*

✚

The land bird and the branch with berries on it,
The carven staff—and last the light, the light
On Guanahani! But, I changed the name;
San Salvador, I called it, and the light
Grew as I gazed, and brought out a broad sky
Of dawning over—not those alien palms,
The marvel of that fair new nature—not
That Indian isle, but our most ancient east,
Moriah with Jerusalem; and I saw
The glory of the Lord flash up, and beat
Through all the homely place.

—ALFRED TENNYSON ("Columbus.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, Thou hast called us out of the old life, with its contentment and seeming sufficiency, into a new life of struggle, adventure and achievement. We go forth, not knowing whither we go, save that Thou leadest us, as Thou hast led Thy servants in all the ages. Yet when they have come to the new place, it is the marvel of Thy providence that they have ever found the old again, but more glorious and more enduring. Teach us, our Father, that the things which we love, and which we seem to lose in the departure upon new and nobler service, are after all not lost, but sure to be found again farther down the way, yet with a glory they never had before. We ask for Thy name's sake.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Soul of the World.*

There is a tendency in literature and philosophy to attribute to the universe an unfriendly, ruthless spirit, as if it were inscrutable and malign. It is the privilege of Christian faith to give a different reading to the signs so freely hung out, and to find in nature and in God the guarantees of freedom and of growth. The heart of things is not implacable and grim. The living soul of the universe is tender, sympathetic and redemptive. That living soul is God, who sent Jesus our Lord into the midst of the world to reveal to our human eyes the effulgence of his Father's glory and goodness.

✚

Scripture—Uphold me with thy free spirit.
—*Psalm 51:12.*

Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy.
—*Neh. 9:17.*

✚

Ye are not bound! The Soul of Things is sweet,
The Heart of Being is celestial rest;
Stronger than woe is will: that which was Good
Doth pass to Better—Best.

—SIR EDWIN ARNOLD
("The Light of Asia.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we lift our thanksgiving to Thee for the disclosure of Thyself in nature, in the Scriptures, in human life, and in the character of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the light of all these revelations we cannot doubt Thy fatherly care for all of Thy children, nor Thy purpose to assist us in our noblest endeavors for character, for freedom and for progress toward perfection. Help us to make the life of Jesus increasingly our model and our inspiration. And may no doubts obscure our confidence in our ability, with Thy help, to win through to life eternal.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*Gethsemane.*

It is not often that the New Testament record gives us glimpses into the inner life of our Lord. But in the narrative of his prayer and anguish in Gethsemane it is as if we stood in reverent spectatorship of the most intimate side of his tragedy. Calvary and the cross were the public exhibition of that in him of which Gethsemane was the private and personal disclosure. Without the struggle in the garden we could hardly understand the sacrifice upon the cross.

✚

Scripture—Then cometh Jesus with them to a place called Gethsemane, and saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I go yonder and pray. And he went forward a little, and fell on his face and prayed, saying, My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.—*Matt. 26:36, 39.*

✚

All those who journey, soon or late,
Must pass within the garden's gate;
Must kneel alone in darkness there,
And battle with some fierce despair.
God pity those who cannot say:
"Not mine but thine"; who only pray:
"Let this cup pass," and cannot see
The purpose in Gethsemane.

—ELLA WHEELER WILCOX ("Gethsemane.")

✚

Prayer—Holy Father, our hearts are bowed in sorrow as we read the story of our Savior's suffering in the garden of anguish. Help us to comprehend something of the mystery and necessity of that experience, and to know that in our lives some part of it must be borne, if we are to share with our Lord in his redemptive work. In humility and loving obedience may we go forward, even through the gloom of the garden and up the steep side of the mount of sorrow. But may we also know that Thou art with us, and that at the end of the way there is light.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*Looking Toward the East.*

All prayers that are availing have an eastward look. They are expectant, eager, searching the darkness for the first beginnings of grey on the horizon. They look toward the rising sun, toward the new day. They expect to be answered. If our prayers are pensive, or complaining, or disappointed, or of uncertain purpose, their fruit will be scant. Our God is the God not of a day that is dead, but of the living Today, and of the glorious Tomorrow whose birth-tokens are the gleams of light in the east.

✚

Scripture—My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning.—*Psalm 130:6.*

✚

Lean out against the dark with vague surmise;
Shadows weigh down the world, and heavy night
Gives no dim promise of a heavenly light;
Yet turn, O soul, toward the east thine eyes.

—MARGARET DELAND
("As One Who Watcheth.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, who art in heaven, we lift our eyes to Thee, from whom cometh our help. Upon the darkness of our way Thou dost arise with light and healing. We praise Thee for the blessing of Thy love, that comes as the clear shining of the sun to make bright all the dim places in life. May we watch for Thy coming with eagerness, even as those who wait for the day. And may this day, the day of all the week the best, be a day of blessing to us, in our homes, in the sanctuary, and in all the wide way in which we go. For we ask in the name of our Lord.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*The Victory of Patience.*

Ofttimes the severest battles are fought without action, and the most glorious victories won by only waiting. These are the battles and victories of patience. But because there is no action it is not meant that there is no effort. For in the self-restraint and faith that lie back of each victory won by the fine strategem of patience there has been put a degree of effort in excess of that required for action. Patience is not indolence or indecision. It is waiting for God to do His part, and it is rooted in the faith that He will surely do His part in His own time.

✚

Scripture—We ourselves glory in you... for your patience and faith.—*2 Thess. 1:4.*

In your patience ye shall win your souls.—*Luke 21:19.*

✚

Why are we so impatient of delay,
Longing forever for the time to be?
For thus we live tomorrow in today;
Yea, sad tomorrows we may never see.
We are too hasty, are not reconciled
To let kind nature do her work alone;
We plant our seed, and like a foolish child
We dig it up — to see if it has grown.

—PHOEBE CARY ("Teach Us to Wait.")

✚

Prayer—Divine Friend, Thou Comforter of all who put their trust in Thee, we bring our lives to Thee again at the dawning of this new day. It is fresh from Thy hands, and it is ours to shape into uses of strength and beauty with Thy help. Give us patience to work consistently at whatever task Thou hast set before us. May we be glad that we have some work to do, and be willing to give it our full measure of skill and enthusiasm. Save us from the fret and worry that so greatly weaken our powers to do good work. And may we learn the lesson that the future is in Thy hands, and that we may in patience wait for Thee.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*The Children's Friend.*

The superiority of Jesus was revealed in no more convincing and beautiful way than by his love of little children and the winsome accessibility of his nature to them. They came to him without fear or awe, feeling, as only a child does, the simplicity and reality of his love. Jesus' estimate of childhood is hardly more significant than childhood's estimate of Jesus. For the child's touch tests the sincerity, the depth and the purity of its elders as few things do.

✚

Scripture—But Jesus said, Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven; and he laid his hands on them. —*Matt. 19:14, 15.*

✚

They brought him their babes, and besought him,
Half kneeling, with suppliant air,
To bless the brown cherubs they brought him,
With holy hands laid on their hair.
Then reaching his hand, he said, lowly,
"Of such is my kingdom"; and then
Took the brown little babes in the holy
White hands of the Savior of men.

—JOAQUIN MILLER ("Beyond the Jordan.")

✚

Prayer—Holy Father, we give Thee the praise of our hearts for the blessings that life brings us through Thy grace. We are all Thy children, and in constant dependence upon Thy care and good will. And when we read the story of our Savior's love for the little ones who were brought to him of old, we are moved with an earnest desire that we may have the same sympathy for all who are weak and in need of care that we find in Thee; for he has made Thy life an open book to us. We thank Thee for the little children in our homes. Give us wisdom so to rear them that we may bring them straight-away to Thee. For Jesus' sake.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*The Kindled Fire.*

In many moments when we seemed to have lost the comfort of Jesus' presence, we have suddenly come upon him, like the disciples of old, and have discovered that he had already kindled the fire for our warming and nourishment. It is thus that the divine provision marvelously anticipates the human need. Could there be any other response than that of love to such divine welcome?

✚

Scripture—So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat about him and cast himself into the sea....So when they got out upon the land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon and bread....So when they had broken their fast, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these?—*John 21:7, 9, 15.*

✚

'Tis long ago, yet faith in our souls
Is kindled just by the fire of coals
That streamed o'er the mists of the sea;
Where Peter, girding his fisher's coat,
Went over the nets and out of the boat,
To answer, "Lovest thou me?"
Thrice over, "Lovest thou me?"

—ALICE CARY ("Fishers of Galilee.")

✚

Prayer—Our gracious Lord, we are glad that we possess the record of the life of our Savior, which reveals Thy love for the world in such tender and impressive forms. Our hearts burn within us, and our eyes grow dim with the pathos and the beauty of that story of old. May we stand with the disciples by the sea, as in days gone by, and hear the words of the Master as he asks today, "Lovest thou me?" Then with gladness enable us to make the great response, "Lord, thou knowest all things. Thou knowest that we love thee." We ask for Thy name's sake.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*The Call for Men.*

In this wonderful new age upon which, through war and sacrifice and a new vision, the world is entering, the need of incorruptible and courageous manhood is felt more profoundly than ever before. The problems of the new society cannot be solved by laws and devices of state, but only by the spiritual forces centering in men of moral highmindedness and unselfish devotion to the public good.

✚

Scripture—They and their sons and their brethren were able men, in strength for service.—*1 Chron. 26:8.*

Be of good courage, and let us play the man for our people, and for the cities of our God.—*2 Sam. 10:12.*

✚

God give us men! A time like this demands
Strong minds, great hearts, true faith and ready hands;
Men whom the lust of office does not kill;
Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy;
Men who possess opinions and a will;
Men who have honor; men who will not lie;
Men who can stand before a demagogue
And damn his treacherous flatteries without winking;
Tall men, sun-crowned, who live above the fog
In public duty and in private thinking.

—JOSIAH G. HOLLAND
("The National Need.")

✚

Prayer—Our heavenly Father, Thy call is upon us, for Thou hast summoned us into the highest service which the universe offers to mankind. We see on every side the work that is to be done, and we know that only those who have seen the vision of God's purpose can accomplish it. We join our voice in the prayer for men of faith and courage to take up the tasks of leadership in the age which is upon us. And as we join in the call, we know that by the right kind of public service we can help to bring the answer to pass. Make us true citizens, that we also may be worthy of a place in the City of God.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Sunrise of Hope.*

Deeply hopeful souls carry with them the atmosphere of a kind of destiny or friendly fate, as though they knew the just desires of their hearts were bound to come true. Hope rises in their lives with something like the same inexorableness as the sun rises in the morning. Such souls cannot be convinced of defeat. They carry success in the fiber and tissue of their being. The soundness of their attitude is justified and established by experience and by the Holy Scriptures. Hope is the anchor that holds fast until the storm and the night are spent and the day dawns.

✚

Scripture—And the sun rose upon him as he passed over Penuel.—*Gen. 32:31.*

As the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, a morning without clouds.—*2 Sam. 23:4.*

✚

The blush of dawn may yet restore
Our light and hope and joy once more.
Sad soul, take comfort, nor forget
That sunrise never failed us yet!

—CELIA THAXTER ("The Sunrise.")

✚

Prayer—Father of Light and Life, in Thee we have our being and our hope. Apart from Thee there is only darkness and death, but in the glory of Thy presence there is fulness of joy, and at Thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore. Make our day bright with Thy goodness, and may no cloud obscure the brightness of Thy face. We are anxious to do our best work, for all that we do is in Thy name. We bring Thee the offerings of gratitude, and take Thy name in thanksgiving upon our lips. Fulfill all Thy purposes for us all through this day, O Father, and lead us in a plain path, for Thy mercy's sake.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*Separation.*

No treasures that we gather in our earthly adventure are comparable to the friendships, the loves, that grow up beside us in the years. It is the breaking of these companionships that gives to life its chief element of pathos. In taking away one who is dear to us, death seems to carry off a part of our essential self, and so leaves us bewildered in the midst of our familiar environment. But is not this the beginning of our orientation in the Unseen, our introduction to the mysteries with which we are to live forever? When at last our whole self is carried hence we shall awake amazed to find heaven so familiar.

✠

Scripture—I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been to me. Thy love to me was wonderful.—*2 Sam. 1:26.*

But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as the rest who have no hope. —*1 Thess. 4:13.*

✠

Thou art not here, thou art not there,
Thy place I cannot see;
I only know that where thou art
The blessed angels be,
And heaven is glad for thee.

—JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER
("Sea Dreams.")

✠

Prayer—Our loving God, Thou hast brought us safely on our way through another week. We count it as the constant evidence of Thy tender care that our lives are lengthened, and our way made straight. Yet we know that life is uncertain. Some have gone out from our circle and walk with us no more. But they are in Thy keeping, and we know that not one grain of wheat will be lost when Thou dost make the pile complete. So in the end of the day may we find all that we have lost in Thy safe-keeping.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Architecture of Character.*

We are taught to think of our soul as a spiritual sanctuary which we are building to God through the years. Like Solomon's temple in olden time, which was builded in silence, without noise of tools or machinery, so the temple of our inner life rises silently, taking on such proportions and features as our thoughts and deeds from day to day determine. In the rearing of this unseen temple our moral and religious motives are reinforced by a certain artistic impulse, such as that which gives the architect of a noble building his chief inspiration.

✚

Scripture—Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
—*1 Pet. 2:5.*

✚

There is an architecture grander far
Than all the fortresses of war,
More inextinguishably bright
Than learning's lonely towers of light.
Framing its walls of faith and hope and love
In deathless souls of men, it lifts above
The frailty of our earthly home
An everlasting dome;
The sanctuary of the human host,
The living temple of the Holy Ghost.

—HENRY van DYKE ("The Builders.")

✚

Prayer— On this holy day we lift our hearts to Thee in thanks, our Father and our God. Its memories are precious to us, and in the joy of the time consecrated to Thy worship we take our way to the house of God. And yet the place which human hands have erected for the worship of the Highest is not so sacred as the Temple of our own soul, which we purpose to keep ever fair and clean for Thy dwelling place. Aid us to make it fit for Thy presence this day. In Jesus' name.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*Seeing the Invisible.*

What distinguishes human from lower orders of intelligence is the power to discern amidst and above the visible objects that make up the outer world a wondrous fine network of invisible realities. Some of these go by such names as laws, hopes, principles, truths, ideals. This world of invisibles is man's most real world. Not all men are aware of this world with equal vividness. Some, like the lower intelligences, live chiefly under the spell of the physical order. But those whose insight makes them at home amid things not seen have depths and worths of experience that others cannot know.

✚

Scripture—For he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.—*Heb. 11:27.*

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. —*2 Cor. 4:18.*

✚

His eyes peered out, intent and afar,
And looking beyond the things that are.
He walked as one who is done with fear,
Knowing at last that God is near.
Only the half of him cobbled with shoes
The rest was away for the heavenly news.

—EDWIN MARKHAM
("The Great Guest Comes.")

✚

Prayer—Gracious God, we hallow Thy name in our hearts and upon our lips. Thou hast lifted our eyes to the hills, from whence our help cometh. We have learned from Thy good Word that our hands may work at humble tasks, while our eyes are fixed upon the life that is eternal. May no work seem too small for us to do willingly and well, and no vision of Thy far-extended kingdom be too great for our contemplation. Help us to live in the discernment of the invisible realities which abide forever. We ask in Christ's name.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*The Highest Evidence.*

Christ's claims upon men's allegiance do not rest upon the faulty arguments of human reasoning, but upon the actual work he has done and is doing in the world. In the presence of his immeasurable influence in history and his present inspiring contact with the sources of all human progress, our theoretical "proofs" of his divinity seem not only superfluous but almost impertinent. The saving, healing, inspiring and revealing power of Jesus of Nazareth, testified to by twenty centuries of Christian experience, is now a tidal wave of evidence before which all skepticism becomes futile and irrational.

✚

Scripture—Now it was the sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes....So they called unto him, Give glory to God, we know that this man is a sinner. He therefore answered, Whether he is a sinner, I know not; one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.—*John 9:14, 24, 25.*

✚

The wisdom of the East was theirs,
And honor crowned their silver hairs,
The man they jeered and laughed to scorn
Was unlearned, poor, and humbly born;
But he knew better far than they
What came to him that Sabbath day;
And what the Christ had done for him,
He knew, and not the Sanhedrim.

—JOHN HAY ("Religion and Doctrine.")

✚

Prayer—Our God, we too have been blind, and the Master has brought us the true light. When there was no health or healing for us, neither salvation in any other name, he came with the gifts of wholeness and power. We bless Thee for this grace of Thine ministered through him. May we hold fast to the assurance of Christ's power in our lives and let no man rob us of our trust in him.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*The Craving for Eternity.*

To his first disciples the attraction of Jesus lay not in some special gift of personal magnetism with which he was endowed—though no doubt he was the most companionable of men—but in a kind of atmosphere of eternity of which his presence always made his friends aware. The heart craves to be lifted above the sensuous and petty and finite, into the ideal and spiritual sphere. Jesus satisfied this craving in his disciples. He seemed to them to bring the ancient years into the present moment, and to carry the present moment into the boundless future, thus touching their finite lives with the infinite and the eternal.

✠

Scripture—The same was in the beginning with God. —*John 1:2.*

Who through an eternal spirit offered himself. —*Heb. 9:14.*

✠

This little life of earth,
These moment-years of time,
Insult the grief sublime
Of the immortal soul, that waiteth for its birth—
Its birth to that domain
Where God and man are one,
Whose everlasting sun
Throws an eternal shadow over memory's plain.

—JULIAN HAWTHORNE ("Unshed Tears.")

✠

Prayer—O Thou eternal Spirit, we know that Thou hast made us in Thine image, for with all our soul we crave the eternal life in which Thou abidest. Without the hope of the timeless future all our good would seem little worth. And our Master has taught us the certainty of that life for which we wait. Fill us more completely with the passion for life, full and complete. Then will we wait in patience till the great change shall come.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*Unspeakable Things.*

It is astonishing, when one reflects upon it, how small a portion of our experience forms the theme of our talk and expression, and how large is the portion that is incommunicable. Even from those who share our life on the most intimate terms, there is of necessity a withholding of much more than we realize. Our conversation and our more formal and deliberated self-expression deal with things that lie near the surface, while the depths of our life find no outlet. This loneliness inherent in every soul is the price we pay for our individuality. It also is the basis of our communion with God, with One who from the depths of His own life can answer the call of the deepest in us.

✚

Scripture—I knew a man in Christ, fourteen years ago; how that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not possible for a man to utter.—*2 Cor. 12:2-4.*

✚

Oh could I tell ye surely would believe it!
Oh could I only say what I have seen!
How should I tell or how can ye receive it,
How, till He bringeth you where I have been!

—F. W. H. MYERS ("St. Paul.")

✚

Prayer—We have been told, our Father, of the wonderful things seen and heard by the men of faith who have lived close to Thee. And there are times in our own lives when the veil seems very thin between us and the world of heavenly reality. We should like to cultivate more fully the sense of things unseen and eternal. We should like to have ever better assurance that the things which we see are temporal, but the things which are unseen are eternal. We pray in Jesus' name.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Language of God.*

It is a mistake to assume that God's communications to us are limited to technical speech, whether of the written or the spoken word. Even our friends who walk by our side have many languages other than words. They speak to us in gestures, in the glow or the gloom of their faces, in a touch of their hand, in a token which they secretly leave where we will find it. And often their most meaningful communication is by way of their silence. So also God speaks to us in the multitudinous voices of nature, the blessings of His providence, the turning of an event. All our environment is vocal with his goodness, and those voiceless promptings from out the silence of our soul are the fleet messengers of His will.

✚

Scripture—Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge.—*Psalm 19:2.*

And how small a whisper do we hear of him! But the thunder of his power who can understand?—*Job 26:14.*

✚

So shalt thou see and hear
The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
Of that eternal language, which thy God
Utters, who from eternity doth teach
Himself in all, and all things in Himself.
Great universal Teacher! He shall mould
Thy spirit, and by giving make it ask.

—SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE ("Frost at Midnight.")

✚

Prayer—Thou art ever speaking to us, our Father, in the voices of nature and of human life. We have often mistaken the speech of men for the revelation of God. But if we have attentive ears we can hear Thy messages to us, teaching us the lessons of Thy power and wisdom, of our weakness and need of Thee. Make us more alert to hear these divine words, written in the book of nature, and in the Word of God. We ask in Thy name.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*The Eternal Question.*

How many are the names by which God has been known! And they are all of them good, the coinage of some moment of human experience in which new discoveries were made of the unfathomable nature of the Eternal. And yet none of these hundred names contains more than a fragment of the divine reality. The name and nature of God are glorious mysteries into which eternity will be too short to permit adequate research. Yet in the sweet simplicities of daily life our Father makes Himself known to the humblest heart!

✚

Scripture—And Jacob was left alone: and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.—*Gen. 32:24, 29.*

✚

No answer came back, not a word,
To the patriarch there by the ford;
No answer has come through the ages
To the poets, the seers, and the sages,
Who have sought in the secrets of science
    The name and the nature of God,
Whether cursing in desperate defiance
Or kissing his absolute rod—
. . . . . .
But strive through the night till the morning
    And mightily shalt thou prevail.

—JOHN HAY ("Israel.")

✚

Prayer—It is the one desire of our lives to know Thee, O God, and to penetrate even a little way into the great mystery of Thy being. With that secret we strive, as did the patriarch of old, and after all the centuries our knowledge of Thee is but as the dust of the balance. But in Jesus Thou hast come very close to us, and we can trust the Father whom Jesus revealed. We thank Thee, and we pray in his name.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*In the Sanctuary.*

The gathering together of many souls in a common place for the worship of God is a practice which commands the sanction not only of the Scripture but of the psychology of the spiritual life as well. We know by our experience that the full power of our personality is not drawn out in solitude or in lonely meditation. There is inspiration and vision in the mingling of our mind with the minds of others. Our imagination is quickened, our heart is warmed, our flagging purpose is caught up on the tide of social purpose and carried to success. Our Lord showed deep understanding of the social nature of our minds when he promised to be present when two or three were gathered together.

✚

Scripture—I was in the spirit on the Lord's day. —*Rev. 1:10.*

✚

Here holy thoughts a light have shed
From many a radiant face,
And prayers of humble virtue made
The perfume of the place.

And anxious hearts have pondered here
The mystery of life,
And prayed the eternal Light to clear
Their doubts, and aid their strife.

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON ("Hymn.")

✚

Prayer—Merciful Father, Thou hast brought us to this good day of rest and of worship. It brings to us the memory of the great events in the story of our salvation from sin. And as our Savior rose on this day from the dead, may we through Thy mercy and sustaining power rise higher in the life of the spirit, and share more fully the companionship of all the pure in heart. Bless to us the assembly of Thy people today, and may the message of the cross inspire us to nobler living, and more Christ-like conduct. We ask in his blessed name.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*The Peril of Disloyalty.*

There are moral abysses into which men have descended, so deep that the heart can contemplate them only with horror. Yet no soul has fallen to such depths in one swift plunge. The descent is gradual. The temptation of today is life's penalty for the sin of yesterday, and tomorrow will bring its whips and scourges for the present wrong. To trifle with the loyalties of life is to invite disaster. Most of all, to tamper with the fidelity we owe to Jesus is to catch a glimpse over the rim of that dark pit of doom where the dead souls dwell.

✚

Scripture—Then Judas, who betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I betrayed innocent blood. But they said, What is that to us? See thou to it. And he cast down the pieces of silver into the sanctuary, and departed. —*Matt. 27:3-5.*

✚

When in his rage he could no longer bear
Men's voices nor the sunlight nor the air,
Nor sleep, nor waking, nor his own quick breath,
Nor God in heaven, nor anything but death,—
I bowed my head, and through my fingers ran
Tears for the end of that Iscariot man,
Lost, in the hopeless struggle of the soul
To make the done undone, the broken whole.

—F. W. H. MYERS ("AMMERGAU.")

✚

Prayer—Holy Father, we have read the tragic story of him who sold the Master, and then in remorse cast himself away. And we ask of our own hearts whether we too might not be tempted to sell the Christ. We look with horror on that deed of old, and yet we know that whenever we set the Lord aside for some present pleasure or profit, we have betrayed him afresh. From such unholy and traitorous traffic save us, for the Savior's sake.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*Is that All?*

The persistence with which we keep asking about immortality is one of the most convincing proofs of the reality of the future life. Our soul cannot adjust itself to the view that life is exhausted in the narrow ranges of our earthly adventure. Although we no longer regard this world as essentially bad, and this life as a dreary pilgrimage, yet our most optimistic estimate of our finite experience leaves our soul unsatisfied. We cannot believe that after all the achievement and tragedy of our mortal years, death is to have the final word.

✚

Scripture—If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most pitiable....The last enemy that shall be abolished is death.—*1 Cor. 15:19, 26.*

✚

A little dreaming by the way;
A little toiling day by day;
A little pain, a little strife,
A little joy — and that is life.

Just dreaming, loving, dying so,
The actors in the drama go—
A flitting picture on the wall,
Love, death, the themes; but is that all?

—PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR ("The Sum.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, when we take inventory of our daily work, our joys and our troubles, and see the hardship that comes to many of our fellow beings in the world, we are at times tempted to wonder what is the meaning of it all, and if it is worth while. We know that the only answer that can satisfy is to be found in seeing the whole of life, and all of its meaning. Help us not to live within narrow limits, where courage might well fail, and the true value of things be lost. But may we see that all life is one, here and hereafter, and find peace by faith in Thee.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*Our Hidden Self.*

It is possible not only to deceive others for a time as to our inner character, but to deceive our own heart as well. Long cultivation of conventional respectability and the habitual affectation of virtue and piety at last may react into the mind, so that one actually comes to identify himself with the appearance he makes rather than with the hidden hypocrite he really is. The tragedy of this self-deception is unspeakable, for such a soul has lost its inner critic, its monitor, and, therefore, its power of self-renewal. Only God's gracious intervention can recall such a soul to reality, and then probably only by way of a sad humiliation.

✚

Scripture—For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he. —*Prov. 23:7.*

✚

What are you? The tale of your breeding and birth,
The brute or the baron, whichever you seem?
Is that what is shown by the light from your hearth
When you sit alone with your hope and your dream?
When you shed the garment of meekness or pride
And sit with yourself, as a man has to do,
You know what is thought by your brothers outside—
Are they right? Are they wrong? Are they picturing You?

—WILBUR D. NESBIT ("Self.")

✚

Prayer—Holy Father, help us not to deceive ourselves by any false professions of goodness. We know that no outward conformity to rules, no compliance with acts of religious character, can have any value in Thy sight, unless we are in our deepest souls interested in the progress of the kingdom of God, in ourselves and in all the world. Help us to be sure of ourselves, and to know that we are to be judged not by appearances, but by the actual purposes of our lives. So may our real selves meet Thy approval and find the true path of peace. We ask in the Master's name.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*The Unfailing Light.*

The sense of continual expansion of life, through the presence of Christ, is an element in all Christian experience. In wisdom, in patience, in efficiency, in goodwill, in love, in all the graces of spiritual character, the way grows brighter and the landscape fairer as our Lord leads us on. When momentary darkness falls upon our outer path, we have God's unfailing inner light, the glowing word of His revelation which we have learned to treasure in our heart. If we hold fast to the light He gives us, and walk by it in the shadow, He will lead us forth into increasing day, and forward into new and fairer fields of experience.

✚

Scripture—Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.—*Psalm 119:105.*

But the path of the righteous is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. —*Prov. 4:18.*

✚

If I stoop
Into a dark, tremendous sea of cloud,
It is but for a time; I press God's lamp
Close to my breast; its splendor, soon or late,
Will pierce the gloom: I shall emerge one day.

—ROBERT BROWNING ("Paracelsus.")

✚

Prayer—O Thou God of all comfort and peace, we adore Thee as the Giver of all that we need. Thy mercies are unfailing, and all Thy gifts to us are fitted to our best desires. In the way that we take be Thou our companion and guide. May the clear shining of the light of Thy Word and Thy Spirit save us from all misadventure and defeat. We would learn more trustfully to walk by faith, and not by sight. And may we not fail to find at last Thy glory. For we ask in the name and through the grace of Jesus Christ our Lord.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Passion to Be Right.*

It is one of the basic proofs of the divine image in man that in the souls of most people there is a sincere and incurable longing to be on terms of friendship with the moral order of the universe. Few deliberately wish to be evil. We like to feel that we are in harmony with life at its center. And some there are who are so disturbed by the lack of justice and good will in the social order of the age that they become the flaming apostles of a better time.

✚

Scripture—Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?—*Mic. 6:6.*

And the people asked him saying, What shall we do then?—*Luke 3:10.*

✚

What shall I do to be just?
What shall I do for the gain
Of the world—for its sadness?
Teach me, O seers that I trust!
Shall I wrench from my finger the ring
To cast to the tramp at my door?
Shall I tear off each luminous thing,
To drop in the palm of the poor?
What shall I do to be just?
Teach me, O ye in the light,
Whom the poor and the rich alike trust;
My heart is aflame to be right!

—HAMLIN GARLAND
("The Cry of the Age.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we should like to be of the number of those who are troubled by the manifest tokens of incompleteness and wrong in our world, and are trying with eagerness and consecration to bring in a better age. We are willing to pay the price of such an effort, and in this fact we know we share somewhat the spirit of our Lord. In his name we pray.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*The Upward Climb.*

The story of the race is a slow ascent from very primitive, childlike and crude beginnings to higher and ever higher levels of living, through the teaching and example of the moral leaders of the past. The earliest races sought for power by mere brute force, and some still hold to that ideal. A nobler thought was that of justice, the restraint of lawlessness by rule. Highest and best is the reign of good will, where at last the principles taught by Jesus have the right of way.

✠

Scripture—And he brought me by the steps whereby they went up.—*Ezek. 40:49.*

The people shall ascend up, every man straight before him.—*Josh. 6:5.*

✠

Three steps there are our human life must climb.
The first is Force.
The savage struggled to it from the slime
And still it is our last, ashamed recourse.

Above that jagged stretch of red-veined stone
Is marble Law,
Carven with long endeavor, monotone
Of patient hammers, not yet free from flaw.

Three steps there are our human life must climb.
The last is Love,
Wrought from such starry element sublime
As touches the White Rose and Mystic Dove.

—KATHERINE LEE BATES
("Three Steps.")

✠

Prayer—Holy Father, we have learned from the lips of our Savior that Thy purpose in history is the training of human society to become a fitting citizenship for the Kingdom of Heaven. May we glory in this high destiny, and set our feet in the ascending way that leads to holiness and to Thee.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Mandate of the Fallen.*

It is one of the significant by-products of war that it brings into bold relief the obligation which the living owe to the dead to complete and safeguard the high enterprises for which they gave their lives. Yet every holy cause puts a like responsibility on those who have witnessed and profited by the sacrifices of the heroes who made it possible. Fidelity to the highest good demands that we take up the sacred token and carry it on to its appointed triumph.

✠

Scripture—I saw the souls of them that had been slain for the testimony which they held; and they cried, How long dost thou not avenge our blood?—*Rev. 6:9, 10.*

✠

We are the dead; short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders Fields.
Take up our quarrel with the foe!
To you, with failing hands, we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high!
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies blow
In Flanders Fields.

—JOHN McCRAE ("In Flanders Fields.")

✠

Prayer—Our Father who art in heaven, Thy name is hallowed upon our lips and in our lives in the measure that we dedicate ourselves to the great things whereby men live and for which they are content to die. Forbid that we should permit ourselves indifferently to neglect the causes that make void and frustrate the heroism of those who have gone before. We pray in the name of our Master and Friend.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*The New Eden.*

The process of creation is evermore going forward. It was not completed in the dim past, nor has there been a moment in history when one could say, Now all is finished. God and man are co-operant in the ever-unfinished yet ever-alluring task of making all things new. And the material for this enterprise is found in abundance in the common life about us. May we be permitted to have a part in this divine adventure.

✚

Scripture—I will build him a sure house.—*1 Sam. 2:35.*
I create new heavens and a new earth.—*Isa. 65:17.*

✚

We men of earth have here the stuff
Of Paradise — we have enough!
We need no other stones to build
The stairs into the Unfulfilled—
No other ivory for the doors—
No other marble for the floors—
No other cedar for the beam
And dome of man's immortal dream.
Here on the paths of every-day—
Here on the common human way—
Is all the busy gods would take
To build a Heaven, to mold and make
New Edens. Ours the task sublime
To build eternity in time!

—EDWIN MARKHAM ("Earth Is Enough.")

✚

Prayer—Our heavenly Parent, Thou art the Maker of our bodies and the Fashioner of our spirits. We are never satisfied with our attainment in this process, because we have not let Thee have the right of way. Yet we would set ourselves anew to the divine work, that at last we and Thou alike may be content with the result. We pray in the name of our Example and Savior.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*The Light of the World.*

How marvelous was that moment in history when the Light that lighteth every man was coming into the world! Never since that time has the older darkness oppressed so deeply the souls of men. Steadily through the centuries has the face of Jesus risen like a sun over the hill-tops of the earth. Still is his light rising, for the world is yet young. And in our world of the inner life we gratefully acknowledge Christ as the Master light of all our seeing, in whose radiant presence our problems are solved and our path made plain.

✚

Scripture—Jesus spake unto them saying, I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life.—*John 8:12.*

✚

O Light, that followest all my way,
I yield my flickering torch to thee;
My heart restores its borrowed ray,
That in thy sunshine's blaze its day
May brighter, fairer be.

—GEORGE MATHESON ("The Cross.")

✚

Prayer—Thou who didst command light to shine out of darkness, shine in our hearts, we pray Thee, and help us to rejoice in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. As Thou hast opened for us the prospect of glory and immortality, may we have courage and good hope in following it. By ways that we know not, lead us to the heights on which Thy sunshine rests forever. By the narrow path of obedience bring all seekers to the clear light of Thy will and liberty. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*The Soul of the Universe.*

The problem of the relation of God to nature, like that of His relation to man, has been the theme of profound inquiry in all the ages. Some have thought of Him as apart from the world, aloof and transcendent. Others have conceived Him as identified with the universe, involved and limited in the phenomenal world. Neither of these views satisfies the mind that accepts Jesus' interpretation of the Father's life. For Jesus saw God as the very light and substance of our universe, but at the same time transcending all the material limitations of the world as we know it. And our Lord, we believe, knew more of God than any other who has passed this way.

✣

Scripture—By his spirit the heavens are garnished. Lo, these are but the outskirts of his ways; and how small a whisper do we hear of him. But the thunder of his power, who can understand?—*Job 26:13, 14.*

✣

The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the plains—
Are not these, O soul, the vision of Him who reigns?"

—ALFRED TENNYSON ("The Higher Pantheism.")

✣

Prayer—O God, Thy glory fills the heaven, and earth is full of Thy praise. Thou art the Creator of all the wonders that we see, and all of them speak of Thy power and wisdom. May we rejoice in the lesson that nature teaches us, and be led to more discerning knowledge of the divine meaning of all the universe. Quicken within us the sense of Thy care for us, and the holy vocation which is ours as Thy servants. Restrain us from all unworthy thoughts of Thee and of our own part in Thy purposes. And may our lives in some true sense illustrate the nature of our Lord. We ask in his name.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*Saints and Martyrs.*

We do well to ponder the need in the church today for the same spirit of quiet heroism which made illustrious the early annals of our faith. The history of Christianity is made glorious by the records of uncalculating devotion on the part of those faithful spirits who counted not life dear unto themselves so they might finish their course with joy and bear glad witness to the gospel of the grace of God. Perhaps Christian life is too smooth and easy today. Perhaps we would be truer to our Lord if we were called upon to endure more for his sake. We ought at least in some degree to be worthy of our heroic inheritance.

✣

Scripture—And they stoned Stephen, calling upon the Lord and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And when he had said this, he fell asleep. And Saul was consenting unto his death. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church.—*Acts 7:59, 60; 8:1.*

✣

Saint, did I say? with your remembered faces,
Dear men and women, whom I sought and slew!
Ah, when we mingle in the heavenly places
How will I weep to Stephen and to you!

—F. W. H. MYERS ("St. Paul.")

✣

Prayer—Father of lights, and God of infinite grace, we draw near to Thee to ask Thy forgiveness and Thy mercy. Thou who givest hope and power to them that trust Thee, grant us the faithfulness of Thy martyrs and the portion of Thy chosen. May we in the hour of trial be able to see Thy glory, and Jesus our Savior standing at Thy right hand. Perfect Thy strength in our weakness, and may Thy gentleness make us great. Enable us to be followers of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. And receive us to Thy glory, through the atoning love of Christ Jesus our Lord.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Brooding Spirit of God.*

That impressive biblical picture of primeval chaos and the beginnings of life evoked by the hovering Spirit of God is beautifully symbolic of the regenerating power of that same Spirit, brooding over the tenebrous stretches of human life, and awakening them to vitality and order. Even after all the centuries of divine activity in the world, there still remains something of that primeval confusion and formlessness which only the Holy Spirit can dispel. His gracious influence, his healing power, his inspiring presence day by day, complete in us the ministry of creation and redemption. We may thus anticipate with confidence some new disclosure of creative powers in the life to be.

✚

Scripture—And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God brooded upon the face of the waters.—*Gen. 1:2.*

✚

Thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all temples the upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for thou know'st; thou from the first
Wast present, and, with mighty wings outspread,
Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast abyss,
And mad'st it pregnant.

—JOHN MILTON ("Paradise Lost.")

✚

Prayer—Merciful Father, our lives need recall from the waste and chaos of sin by Thy voice, and by the calm and hovering presence of the Spirit of grace. Into our hearts may he come, and may we make for him such room and such supremacy as shall give us kinship with all the holy and the pure. Bless our home, our loved ones, our daily work and our hopes for better things. May we find for ourselves the deeper springs of joy, and may Thy good presence sustain us in all the hours of trouble. We ask for Thy name's sake.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*The Holy Sepulchre.*

The tomb of Jesus is evermore the symbol of the buried and discarded past. Into that sepulchre there went the superstitions and cruelties that marked the first experiences of the race. There were left the crude and impossible conceptions of God and of religion. Out from that grave came the world's new light and joy. And through the ages it is ever the same. Each new generation brings to the grave of Jesus its unprofitable and discarded forms and dogmas, and waits expectant for the new and better faith to rise with him from the mystery of death. May this be no less true of our own lives. With him alone can we rise from our dead selves to higher things.

✚

Scripture—Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new tomb wherein was never man yet laid. There they laid Jesus.
—*John 19:41, 42.*

✚

All is o'er, the pain, the sorrow,
Human taunts and fiendish spite;
Death shall be despoiled tomorrow
Of the prey he grasps tonight;
Yet awhile, His own to save,
Christ must linger in the grave.

—JOHN MOULTRIE ("The Sacred Tomb.")

✚

Prayer—Divine Father, in the solemn mystery of life may the tomb of Jesus have a spiritual significance. We thank Thee that it has for us and all mankind the meaning of his triumph over death. But we also thank Thee for its deeper meaning to our souls. The world buries there its unhappy past. In his tomb help us to lay our lesser selves, our selfish aims, our unholy thoughts; that we may henceforth not be holden of them. Then may we wait with confidence the rising of our nobler life with him. We pray in his name.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Wonders of the Starry Sky.*

The stars tell us of God. They have always begotten reverence in the human heart, no less in modern than in olden times. With our science we know much more about the starry heavens than did the shepherd singers and worshippers of ancient Israel; but they, like us, felt the awful beauty that shone forth when night spread her dark veil over the sky. If, as the psalmist says, God calls all the stars by name, we can be sure that He also knows our names, and cares for us with the same power as that which built the sky.

✚

Scripture—When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him?
—*Psalm 8:3, 4.*

✚

My soul her wings doth spread
And heavenward flies,
The Almighty's mysteries to read
In the large volume of the skies.
—JOHN HABBINGTON ("Nox nocti indicat scientiam.")

✚

Prayer—O Lord, Thou art the Creator of all things. Thou hast made the earth, and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. In wonder we view their beauty, rejoicing that it is our Father who has made them all. They shall perish but Thou remainest. And Thou hast made us also, in Thine own image and after Thy likeness. Help us, we beseech Thee, to be worthy of our birthright. May we so strive to be like Christ, our elder Brother, that we may help men thus to know Thee, to whom be glory, forever and ever.
—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*The Constancy of Love.*

Love is the chief of all the virtues because it comprehends them all. There is no love without faith in the beloved, no love without hope, no love without loyalty. All the virtues melt at last into this one, just as all our problems are solved at last when we have learned to love as Christ loved. Whatever else we get or fail to get out of life, let us not fall short of possessing a nature that loves man and God, for this is what life is for—"it is just our chance of learning love." Our home loves and our friendships, and all the noble affinities by which we are drawn to chosen friends—these are the rudiments and roots of the wider love that serves mankind and communes with God.

✚

Scripture—Love never faileth.—*1 Cor. 13:8.*

✚

Ay, and when prophecy her tale hath finished,
Knowledge hath faded from the trembling tongue,
Love shall survive, and love be undiminished;
Love be imperishable, love be young.

—F. W. H. MYERS ("St. Paul.")

✚

Prayer—Hear us in Thy mercy, O Father, when we approach Thee in prayer. We believe; help Thou our unbelief. We desire to love. Take Thou the stony heart out of our flesh, and give us the new heart, aflame with affection to Thee and all Thy children. Help us to know the joy there is in love, and its power to sustain us in the stress of life. Help us to love as Christ has loved us, even unto the end. And may we abide in his unchangeable love.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*The Quest of Perfectness.*

The best proof of a divine reality at the heart of things is the passion for growth, the desire for perfection, that makes itself felt in all who are sensitive to the possibilities of spiritual attainment. There is a certain divine pulsion, an urge of soul, a restlessness for fulfillment that cannot be satisfied short of some adequate realization of the completer life. To attain this ampler experience has been the quest of all great souls who have passed this way. To help others to the same goal is the purpose of all redemptive effort.

✚

Scripture—That ye may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.—*Col. 4:12.*

The God of peace...make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight.—*Heb. 13:20, 21.*

✚

For men begin to pass their nature's bound,
And find new hopes and cares which fast supplant
Their proper joys and griefs; they grow too great
For narrow creeds of right and wrong, which fade
Before the unmeasured thirst for good; while peace
Rises within them ever more and more.
Such men are even now upon the earth,
Serene amid the half-formed creatures round,
Who should be saved by them and joined with them.

—ROBERT BROWNING ("Paracelsus.")

✚

Prayer—We are grateful, holy Father, for the life that we now possess, and also for the assurance that we shall grow richer in the graces of holiness as we approach Thee. We are happy today in the blessings we have, and we know that the years can only bring better things as we fulfil our part in the program of the universe. May nothing less than likeness to Thyself satisfy our awakened souls. Inspire us, we pray Thee, with the longing to reach the higher life. For Jesus' sake.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*The Glory of Maturing Life.*

The passing of years is like the coming of dawn,—slow, silent, inevitable. The most eager cannot hasten the quiet, irresistible movement, and the most reluctant cannot forbid. Some gifts the years bring which we would fain decline—age, sorrow, disappointment. Some treasures they take which we would keep forever—youth, beauty, innocence. But there are more precious values which time alone cannot supply and the years cannot remove—friendship, virtue, patience, faith and love.

✚

Scripture—Now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things.—*1 Cor. 13:11.*

I have written unto you, fathers, because ye know him who is from the beginning.—*1 John 2:13.*

✚

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made;
Our times are in His hand
Who saith, "A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God; see all, nor be afraid!"

—ROBERT BROWNING ("Rabbi Ben Ezra.")

✚

Prayer—Heavenly Parent, from whom we receive all the gifts of life, we bless Thee that our pathway grows brighter as the years go on, and that we have faith to believe the best is yet to be. Help us to grow old with dignity, goodness of heart and cheerfulness. May we not be spoiled by life's successes, nor made bitter by its troubles. May children find us loving. May men and women younger than ourselves discover in us optimism and appreciation of all that is good. And may those of mature life welcome us to their circle as friends and companions of the upper way. We ask in Jesus' name.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*Sleeping and Waking.*

The consciousness of the divine presence, as of an immanent and precious reality, is not to be secured without the daily practice of prayer and meditation. The literature of devotion is a constant reminder of this fact. The saints have not entered into the mystic sense of the ever-present God without the cultivation of habitual prayerfulness. This is no task self-imposed in the effort to attain holiness, but a priceless privilege, leading to the innermost sanctuary of spiritual life.

✚

Scripture—In peace will I both lay me down and sleep; for thou, Lord, alone makest me to dwell in safety. —*Psalm 4:8.*

When I awake, I am still with thee.—*Psalm 139:18.*

✚

When sinks the soul, subdued by toil, to slumber,
Its closing eye looks up to Thee in prayer;
Sweet the repose, beneath Thy wings o'ershaded,
But sweeter still to wake and find Thee there.
So shall it be at last in that bright morning
When the soul waketh and life's shadows flee:
Oh, in that hour, fairer than daylight dawning,
Shall rise the glorious thought, I am with Thee.

—HARRIET BEECHER STOWE
("Still, Still with Thee.")

✚

Prayer—Holy Father, our hours and moments are all Thine own. We yield ourselves in happy confidence to Thy friendship and Thy guidance. Day by day our hearts waken to the call of Thy spirit, and night by night we lie down in quietness of soul, for Thou, Lord, art our changeless Companion, our confidence, and our everlasting reward. Aid us in the cultivation of this attitude of prayerful assurance, and enable us to gain the poise and courage in daily life which is the result of such a holy relationship. We ask in Jesus' name.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Master of Life.*

We may well understand the curiosity and interest of the people who followed Lazarus hoping that they might look upon a man called back from death. But equally marvelous are those lives that have been recalled by the power of the gospel from the dominion of selfishness and sin. How puissant must our Master be to have summoned forth from the grave a dead man. But is not that power as amazing that is able to lift to the regenerate life those who appeal to him for aid? When we view life in the true perspective this seems the summit of achievement.

✠

Scripture—The common people therefore of the Jews learned that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also whom he had raised from the dead.—*John 12:9.*

✠

Behold a man raised up by Christ!
The rest remaineth unrevealed;
He told it not, or something sealed
The lips of that Evangelist.

—ALFRED TENNYSON
("In Memoriam.")

✠

Prayer—Heavenly Father, Thou art the Giver of life, and its Sustainer. Thine is the power that brings us into the world, and Thine are the cords that hold us back from death. Deliver us, we pray Thee, from the fear of evil and death. Give us confidence in the Master who has made known in marvelous way his power to save. And may we follow him, who is the Lord of life and death; for he can redeem us, not from the tomb alone, but from the death that cannot die. May we ever trust in him.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*The Forgiving God.*

If we could see life in its true perspective, as God sees it, we would never be foolish enough to fall into selfish and unholy ways. Sin is not only wrong: it is foolish. Something of God's tenderness in forgiving our faults must issue from his fatherly understanding of the folly and childishness of our behavior. His forgiveness is not mere forgetfulness, but is His restoring grace.

✚

Scripture—I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.—*Isa. 43:25.*

✚

Ah, when at last we lie with tranced breath,
Not vexing Thee in death,
And Thou rememberest of what toys
We made our joys,
How weakly understood
Thy great commanded good,
Then, fatherly not less
Than I, whom Thou hast molded from the clay,
Thou'lt leave Thy wrath and say,
"I will be sorry for their childishness."

—COVENTRY PATMORE
("The Boy's Punishment.")

✚

Prayer—Our loving Father, we lift up our hearts to Thee in prayer and gratitude, for Thou hast brought us into life, and art the Giver of all we possess. Thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and we crave Thy approval of our day's work. Cast us not away because our lives are faulty, but give us the will to trust and obey Thee. We bring this week to its close under Thy blessing. Preserve us all our days, for Thy mercy's sake.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Great Enlistment.*

Every act of self-dedication to a holy purpose is a fresh and impressive crisis in life. Like our Lord, we come to such moments, when great decisions must be made. The commitment of self to a good and holy cause is like an enlistment for service. But these supreme decisions, like the moment of baptism in the experience of Jesus, are made for life and for no shorter time. In the light and meaning of such moments all the purposes of the soul take on a new and more impressive significance. We are enlisted in the eternal struggle for the victory of the right.

✚

Scripture—And straightway, coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens rent asunder, and the Spirit as a dove descending upon him; and a voice came out of the heavens, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased.—*Mark 1:10, 11.*

✚

But, as I rose out of the laving stream,
Heaven opened her eternal doors, from whence
The Spirit descended on me like a dove;
And last, the sum of all, my Father's voice,
Audibly heard from heaven, pronounced me His,
Me His beloved Son, in whom alone
He was well pleased.

—JOHN MILTON ("Paradise Regained.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we read with reverence the record of our Savior's self-dedication to the work of righteousness, and of his induement with the Spirit for his mighty ministry. We should like to follow him in his devotion to the will of God, and in his life of holiness and service through the indwelling Spirit of truth. Help us to know that the opportunities and the joys of the life of cooperative goodness are as truly ours as our Master's, and that Thou art more willing to grant us the Holy Spirit than are we to receive.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*The Silent Message of the Skies.*

All the generations of humanity have been amazed and inspired by the wonders of the starry heaven above. It is not strange that they often invested these shining sentinels of the sky with personality, and worshipped them as gods. If we, with our ampler knowledge of the nature of the universe, have passed this primitive conception, we ought not to be less sensitive to the mystery and symbolism of the heavens. Rather we should feel the thrill of their unspoken manifestation of the glory of God, and their endless song of praise.

✚

Scripture—There is no speech nor language; their voice is not heard. But their line is gone out through all the earth; their words to the end of the world.—*Psalm 19:3, 4.*

The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.—*Job 38:7.*

✚

Look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold;
There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
But in his motion like an angel sings.

—WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE ("Merchant of Venice.")

✚

Prayer—O Thou great Creator, who hast set Thy glory upon the heavens, we praise Thee for all the wonders of Thy universe, which in its greatness and beauty fills us with joy that we also are the creatures of Thy hand. And Thou hast taught us that these things which Thou hast made are only the short-lived tokens of Thy power. They shall perish, but Thou remainest. And we, too, who wear Thine image, shall abide into the long eternity ahead. Help us to make our lives worthy of Thee and of the destiny held out to us. And may our song of rejoicing be not less pleasing to Thee than that of the morning stars.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*The Divine Presence.*

It is difficult to think of the divine Life without resort to the familiar categories of human thinking—bodies, appearances, and limitations. Yet it is necessary for us to rise to some more adequate thought of God as spirit, immanent and intimate, before we can attain a satisfactory conception of His presence. It has been a long and difficult discipline by which the soul of man has risen from faulty and foolish notions of the Eternal to the conceptions which Jesus has made possible.

✚

Scripture—They should seek God, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he is not far from each one of us; for in him we live, and move and have our being.—*Acts 17:27.*

✚

But God is never so far off
As even to be near;
He is within: our spirit is
The home He holds most dear.
To think of Him as by our side
Is almost as untrue,
As to remove His throne beyond
Those skies of starry blue.

—FREDERICK W. FABER
("Two Worlds.")

✚

Prayer—Holy Father, we adore Thee, as the infinite and eternal Life, the ineffable Love, and the sum of all Being. We have no words in which to voice Thine excellence, but we have learned to know and trust Thee as our Father and Friend. In the recognition of Thy pervasive presence in all life, and within our own souls, help us to find comfort and strength. We worship Thee, and we make Thee increasingly our own. In the spirit of Jesus.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*The Supremacy of the Spirit.*

Against all the philosophies of despair which insist upon the helplessness of man to take the better way, our soul keeps affirming its ineradicable conviction that within large spaces we can do what we will with our lives. No view of life that makes the spiritual subordinate to the material, however it may seem to convince the intellect, can satisfy our deeper knowledge of truth and reality. The soul's mastership of the flesh, and of event and accident, while not manifested at the call of caprice or unreason, is nevertheless the truest fact in our experience when exercised within the moral limits set by God's providence.

✚

Scripture—The spirit breathes where he wills. —*John 3:8.*

I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.—*Phil. 4:13.*

✚

We cannot kindle when we will
The fire that in the heart resides;
The Spirit bloweth and is still,
In mystery our soul abides.
But tasks in hours of insight will'd
Can be through hours of gloom fulfill'd.

✚

Prayer—We confess before Thee our weakness and our sin, holy Father. We come over soon to the end of our strength and virtue. But in the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the presence of the Holy Spirit we are confident that all needful things are possible. Fill us with the purpose to do what Thou shalt desire at all cost.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*Awaiting the Time of Departure.* We cannot evade death if we would. We should not wish to, even if we might. Those who have lived in close and habitual familiarity with spiritual things seem to find death wearing a familiar and friendly countenance when they meet him face to face. They make ready for his coming with quiet hope and faith, and often they ask us who remain not to mourn their departure as though we had been robbed of their presence. They but go a little way ahead of us, and await us around the bend. The soul that has learned to face duty from day to day is ever prepared to meet death unafraid.

✚

Scripture—I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith.—*2 Tim. 4:6, 7.*

✚

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea.

—ALFRED TENNYSON
("Crossing the Bar.")

✚

Prayer—We know, dear Father, that we have no long time of abiding here. Even at the longest, the time of our departure draws nigh. We would live in the solemn consciousness of that great truth, and so shape the work and pleasure of each day that all shall be calmness with us when the call shall come. We would go as victors, not as vanquished. In the spirit of our Savior we ask.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Sustaining God.*

In the Psalms, those grand hymns of the faith, there is expressed something of that confidence in the timeless and changeless God which was the glory of the choice souls of ancient Israel. If those prophets of the dawn had reason to put such faith in the Infinite, how much more have we! Theirs was a faint and lonely hope, based on their personal sense of the divine and the few disclosures of providence which the infant world had beheld. Ours is the morning glow of the risen sun, in the light of which doubt and shadow flee away. For God to us is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

✚

Scripture—Of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure. Thou art the same, and thy years fail not.—*Psalm 102:25-27.*

✚

All which is real now remaineth,
And fadeth never;
The hand which upholds it now sustaineth
The soul forever.

—JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER ("My Soul and I.")

✚

Prayer—Holy Father, as our fathers trusted in Thee and were not ashamed, so we call upon Thee for blessing and comfort. In the thought that Thou art ever the same helpful and supporting God we find comfort. Put us on guard against the evil of the world. Make us more earnest in our quest of things eternal. Bestow upon us something of Thine own fulness of life. And assist us to acquire that consciousness of eternity which is the token of our companionship with Thee. We pray in the spirit of Jesus.
—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*Workers and Seers.*

From one point of view the new social order which Jesus is fashioning on the earth through the centuries is a heavenly, supernatural creation, brought down into our world from above, as the seer of the Apocalypse beheld it. From another, it is the result of human effort, like the city Nehemiah reared. Both views are true. It is God's task, but it is also ours, and we share the responsibility for the great result. With the divine help, we are building daily on the walls of the city of God, each at the spot where his life is set.

✚

Scripture—And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven.—*Rev. 21:2.*

And they builded....every one over against his own house.—*Neh. 3:1, 28.*

✚

We are builders of that city;
All our joys and all our groans
Help to rear its shining ramparts;
All our lives are building stones.
Whether humble or exalted,
All are called to task sublime;
All must aid alike to carry
Forward one sublime design.

—FELIX ADLER ("The Golden City.")

✚

Prayer—Holy Father, we praise Thee both for the joy of vision and the privilege of service. Sometimes Thou dost grant us glimpses of the better time to come, when the gospel of our Lord shall have sway from sea to sea. That vision inspires us, for it seems like the coming down of some fair celestial city to our troubled earth. Then we turn again to our daily task, for we know that such a place can have reality only as we help to build its walls on the solid ground of our human experience. Thus glorify our daily work with the vision of what is to be. We ask in the spirit of Jesus.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Way to God.*

Men have sought out many ways of approach to God. They have imagined that He could be found by thinking their way toward Him, by the keeping of ceremonial rules and ordinances, by retirement from the world into an ascetic life of prayer, by munificent gifts of money to the church, by scrupulous keeping of commandments. But while such efforts have not been altogether without their reward, our Lord has shown us that the true way to God is the simple and homely way of loving service to our fellow men. God is among His people, and we shall find Him in the degree in which we enter into the struggles and needs of men and women in the work-a-day world, by whose side as comrade and co-worker the good Father stands.

✣

Scripture—He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him. —*1 John 2:10.*

✣

The way to God is by the road of men;
Find thy far heaven in near humanity;
Love thy seen neighbor as thyself. Thereby
Thou lovest Him Unseen, who is the All!

—SIR EDWIN ARNOLD
("The Love of God and Man.")

✣

Prayer—Our heavenly Father, we have learned from the lips of our Master and his first disciples the truth that Thou lovest all humanity, and as we also love, we become like Thee. And so we learn to love, because Thou hast first loved us. Make plain to us the pathway of good will and helpfulness to each other. Teach us the lesson that when we seek the good of our fellow-men we become like Thee in character and life. And bring us to more intimate communion with Thyself by this participation in Thy virtues. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*The New World.*

It is the glory of the time in which we live that men's imaginations are touched with the hope of a new social order of justice and brotherhood. There is universal expectancy that a better world order is arising from the devastation and humiliation of a world war, and the revelations of man's inhumanity which war has made clear. To be privileged to live in so fateful an epoch is one of our most inspiring reflections.

✚

Scripture—And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea.—*Rev. 21:1.*

The night is far spent, and the day is at hand. —*Rom. 13:12.*

✚

Ye who bear on the torch of living art
In this new world—saved for some wondrous fate—
Deem not that ye have come, alas, too late,
But haste right forward with unfailing heart!
Ye shall not rest forlorn,—
Behold, even now, the morn
Rises in splendor from the orient sea,
And the new world shall greet a new divinity.

—RICHARD WATSON GILDER ("Ode.")

✚

Prayer—Divine Parent, we adore Thee for the life Thou hast given us, and for the blessings by which it is enriched. Our souls grow warm with gratitude at the thought of Thy unfailing kindness to us. Thou hast given us this good world in which to live and work. Yet we look for a better world to come, not alone the heavenly life of holiness and peace, but the new age of hope and betterment, which it was our Savior's purpose to usher in. Help us, O Father, to have a part in the realization and enjoyment of that good time, when Thy will shall be done in earth even as it is in heaven. We ask in the name of Jesus our Lord.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*Humanity in the Making.*

Our Lord has taught us to think of God not as resting from all his work, but as working, even to the present moment. His creative days have not passed, nor is His creative task done. In whatever degree we may conceive of physical nature as a finished thing, it is clear that man is yet in the making. What possibilities are yet to be realized in our humanity we may not guess, but we who have seen Jesus believe that his personality and character define the ideal toward which the creative God is molding mankind.

✚

Scripture—So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him.—*Gen. 1:27.*

Till we all come...unto a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.—*Eph. 4:13.*

✚

Creation's Lord, we give Thee thanks
That this Thy world is incomplete;
That battle calls our marshaled ranks,
That work awaits our hands and feet.

That Thou hast not yet finished man,
That we are in the making still,—
As friends who share the Maker's plan,
As sons who know the Father's will.

—WILLIAM DEWITT HYDE ("Progressive Creation.")

✚

Prayer—On this new day we thank Thee, our Father, for the progress we have made thus far in the attainment of the higher life of knowledge and happiness. Every day adds to the debt of love we owe Thee for Thy goodness to us Thy children. Most of all we praise Thee that life is constantly revealing new meanings to us as we conform ourselves to the great model presented to us in the life of our Lord. Save us, we beseech Thee, from the danger of being satisfied with the present. May we press on to better things yet to be, until we come into the joy of Thy presence. —*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*The Wretchedness of Evil.*

In the face of actual experience it seems unprofitable to debate the question of the existence of a hell. Whatever figurative value may be allowed to the words of Holy Scripture, it needs no argument that, apart from God and the life of faith and integrity, there can only be the outer darkness for which no name is adequate. To look at sin and its wretchedness with steady and candid eye reveals more than all our arguments can prove. To be saved from the fate of such wretchedness is salvation indeed.

✚

Scripture—But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?—*Rom. 7:23, 24.*

✚

Me miserable! Which way shall I fly,
Infinite wrath, and infinite despair?
Which way I fly is hell: myself am hell;
And, in the lowest deep, a deeper deep,
Still threatening to devour me, opens wide,
To which the hell I suffer seems a heaven.

—JOHN MILTON ("Paradise Lost.")

✚

Prayer—O Thou who hast made us in Thine own image, and destined us for the highest purposes, we tremble at the danger lest we should fail of our high enterprise and be lost to the better ends of life. We have no other good beside Thee. Save us from selfishness, from sin and from the death that cannot die. Teach us the amazing breadth and depth of Thy love, that seeks to save to the uttermost. And most of all teach us that our destiny is truly in our own hands, for we determine from day to day the fabric of our characters. Forgive and save us. For Thy name's sake.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*The Comfort of God.*

God is not really God to us until we have some appreciable sense of His presence at our side in all our experiences. Mere belief in His existence brings God only to the threshold of our soul. It remains for us to let Him in as a real presence, to make a place for Him as guest and friend, comforter and companion, one with whom our soul holds habitual converse, who softens and gladdens all our day, and makes peaceful all our night. This comforting presence of the spiritual God involves us in no superstition or strain of intelligence, but is the natural fruitage of rational faith.

✚

Scripture—O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is.—*Psalm 63:1.*

✚

Had not his poor heart spoken with
That which, being everywhere,
Lets none who speak with Him seem all alone,
Surely the man had died of solitude.

—ALFRED TENNYSON
("Enoch Arden.")

✚

Prayer—It is our constant cause for thankfulness, dear Father, that Thou abidest evermore the Friend and Comforter of every soul that comes to Thee in trouble and in trust. When all others leave us, Thou remainest constant and kind. When other helpers fail and comforts flee, abide with us and bring peace to our souls. Cast us not away from Thee. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us. Yea, the work of our hands, establish Thou it.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*Craving a Humble Task.*

Who shall say that one man's work is greater than another's? Our social order, seeing life fragmentarily, puts special premiums upon this service and upon that, and so life's activities have come to be arranged in a graded system of precedences. But God, who sees life whole, sees how essential are those tasks which men count humble, and in His eyes all service ranks the same. That by which He judges men is not the dignity or the inconspicuousness of their work, but the faithfulness with which they perform it.

✚

Scripture—For everyone that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.—*Luke 14:11.*

✚

In outskirts of thy kingdoms vast,
Father, the humblest spot give me;
Set me the lowliest task thou hast,
Let me, repentant, work for thee!

—HELEN HUNT JACKSON ("A Last Prayer.")

✚

Prayer—Most merciful and gracious God, we confess before Thee our sins and shortcomings, our pride and self-sufficiency. We have dreamed too much of our own place and success. We have craved for ourselves the favored estate and easy task. We ask of Thee a better mind, that with humility we may choose the simpler and more necessary work in Thy kingdom. Among the very many who must labor at quiet and obscure duties give us a useful and contented part. Then we may pray with cheerful and confident mind, "Thy kingdom come." We ask it in the Savior's name.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*Hearing the Call of God.*

God is evermore seeking a way of communication with our soul. He has a blessing to give, or a warning, or a work to be done. He uses an event, or some circumstance, or perhaps a friend, as the carrier of His message. Ofttimes the intuitive prompting of our own heart is His whispered call. To know God's voice and to have grace to respond with sensitive intelligence to His will, puts us in spiritual communion with all other responsive souls who, though hidden from us, hear the Father's call and obey His word.

✚

Scripture—And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak, for thy servant heareth.—*1 Sam. 3:10.*

Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I, send me.—*Isa. 6:8.*

✚

Be of good cheer, brave spirit; steadfastly
Serve that low whisper thou hast served; for know,
God hath a select family of sons
Now scattered wide thro' earth, and each alone,
Who are thy spiritual kindred, and each one
By constant service to that inward law,
Is weaving the sublime proportions
Of a true monarch's soul.

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON ("Life.")

✚

Prayer—Parent of good, Thou Giver of all blessing, we bring to Thee the record of the week now closing, and ask Thee to purge it of its mistakes and errors, for it has been our purpose to make it pleasing to Thee. Wherein we have failed, do Thou by Thine own forgiving love help us to wipe out the record, by our earnest effort at amendment and our sorrow for sin. And may we ever hear Thy voice calling us to better things, to holiness and to eternal life. Hear our prayer for Jesus' sake.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Coming of Christ.*

Humanity has taken on new dignity since Jesus walked this earth. We no longer estimate man by the lowliness of his origin among the brutes and out of the dust, but we think of him in terms of the life that one man has reached,—the Man Christ Jesus. It is the goal and not the beginning that determines a journey's meaning. And Jesus is the goal of all our striving. To his perfection we seek to approach. In his likeness alone shall we be satisfied.

✚

Scripture—But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his son, born of a woman.—*Gal. 4:4.*

✚

He came
Of purest Mother, Perfect Child, bego.
Divinelier, surely, than we know; arrived
In this world—of His many worlds—by path
Leading to birth as new, as sweet, as strange
As what His dear feet opened past the Tomb.
If we should strive to say in mortal speech
Where He was Man, and why much more than Man,
The earthly words would mar the Heavenly truth.

—SIR EDWIN ARNOLD ("The Light of the World.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we bless Thee for the wonderful gift of Christ Jesus our Lord, who for us men and our salvation entered the gates of human life and walked with us as brethren in the days of his flesh. Help us, we beseech Thee, to comprehend something of the intimacy of his relationship with us in the family of God, and to feel that what he has accomplished of holy living and dying, of noble devotion to the ends of righteousness, and of victory over sin, disease and death, is now made possible to us, in our degree, through the power of his cross. We crave his friendship, his spirit and his saving grace. And in his name we pray.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*The Passing of Summer.*

The seasonal ordering of our years is not an accident. On the contrary, it is a gracious provision of God, suited to the need of man's nature for rhythm in his experience. We welcome each season with joy, and bid it farewell with tender gratitude for the delights or duties it has brought us, and for the new stage it has marked in the ascending way of friendship with our fellows and with God. Our emotion is peculiarly tender and grateful as summer turns to leave. Its softness and warmth and color have enriched our life, and we shall carry into the long future some vision or purpose that has arisen in our soul at the deft touch of the season that is passing.

✚

Scripture—Wisdom and might are his: he changeth the times and seasons.—*Dan. 2:20, 21.*

The harvest is past, the summer is ended.—*Jer. 8:20.*

✚

Oh, sacrament of summer days!
Oh, last communion in the haze!
Permit a child to join.

Thy sacred emblems to partake,
Thy consecrated bread to break,
Taste thine immortal wine.

—EMILY DICKINSON ("Indian Summer.")

✚

Prayer—O God of the seasons, Thou Giver of days and years, we witness Thy providence in the coming of ever new and marvelous times in the hurrying calendar of our lives. The gifts of the autumn are from Thy hand. All the seasons of the year are necessary to its roundness and value, and to our enjoyment of its changes. For the fruits and colors of the autumn days accept our thanks, and may there be no sadness in our hearts at the departure of the summer, but only a joyful welcome of the sterner days of winter that are to come. We ask for Thy name's sake.
—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*The Coming of Age.*

The maturing years bring with them not only maturing wisdom but also maturing joy. The joy of childhood and youth is gladness—the instinctive response of fresh and vibrant life to the call of the world. The joy of middle life is happiness—the grateful answer of the soul to its friendships and its practical successes in a world of opportunity and duty. But the joy of full age is blessedness—the freedom and comfort of a peace that passeth understanding, whose roots take hold on the foundations of the world and whose flower blossoms in the garden of the King.

✚

Scripture—The days of our years are three-score years and ten, or even by reason of strength fourscore years; yet is their pride but labor and sorrow, for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.—*Psalm 90:10.*

✚

Altars once flaming, still with incense fragrant,
Passion's uneasy nurselings rocked asleep,
Hope's anchor faster, wild desire less vagrant,
Life's flow less noisy, but the stream how deep!

—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES ("The Iron Gate.")

✚

Prayer—The passing of the days makes us aware of our own passing life, our Father, and of the shortness of the time we have for the completion of our plans. We grow in appreciation of the fact that much we once purposed to do we must leave unaccomplished. Our strength grows less, and our joy in the physical world about us declines. But help us to find increasing happiness in the things that do not pass away. May the sunset hours of life be the most beautiful of all. And may we find increasing satisfaction in the assurance of the life that shall not end.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*The Coming Day of God.*

If the people of ancient Israel looked forward to a day of glory and of judgment, when God would vindicate His people and punish His foes, it was but the symbol of that advancing reign of righteousness which is worthy to be called at last the Kingdom of Heaven. It is the business of the church of God to bring this dream to reality. Nothing less than a world of peace and good will can satisfy the divine purpose or the souls of the saints. And if war has deeply entrenched itself in the habits of any portion of mankind, it is but one more of the evils which the spirit of Jesus must conquer and cast out.

✚

Scripture—Behold the day of the Lord cometh. —*Isa. 13:9.*

✚

Great day of God, all glorious;
Great day of Peace, so blest;
The thought of Thee brings gladness,
And dilates every breast.
Great day of one religion,
When all are understood;
One faith in Life Eternal,
One God, one Brotherhood.

—LOUISE R. WAITE ("The Great Day of God.")

✚

Prayer—Our Gracious Father, we know that the world in which we live is not yet made after the pattern of the kingdom of God that is to be. The prophets of all the years have looked with eyes of hope for the dawning of a better time, and our Savior has taught us to expect and pray for the day when enduring peace shall prevail, and Thy will shall be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us some good part in the hastening of that time, we pray. And may the influence of our words and conduct serve to convince those whose lives we touch that the program of our Lord is worth while and sure to be realized. In his name.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*The Watchful Guidance of God.*

As we reflect upon our failures and indirections we become increasingly aware of the experimental character of much of our life. We seem like apprentices in a craft whose principles and materials we but vaguely understand. We have much to learn, many mistakes and misadventures to make, much trying out of our foolish and vain ideas, much humiliation at the crudeness of our efforts and our results. The one thing that can save us from disillusion and despair is an awareness that the Master-craftsman watches us and guides our uncouth efforts toward wisdom and deftness and skill.

✚

Scripture—I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will counsel thee, with mine eye upon thee.—*Psalm 32:8.*

✚

Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,
It shall be still in strictest measure even
To that same lot, however mean or high,
Tow'rd which time leads me, and the will of heaven;
All is, if I have grace to use it so,
As ever in my great Task-master's eye.

—JOHN MILTON ("Sonnets.")

✚

Prayer—Our holy Father, it is a comfort to us in all times of trouble and of joy that we have Thy friendship and direction. We do not always yield ourselves to Thy guidance, but after every attempt to find our own way we come back weary and footsore to Thee. Save us, we beseech Thee, from the vain efforts that profit nothing. The paths that we choose are not good; the cisterns that we dig hold no water. Thou only hast the words of life, and in Thee alone, as revealed to us in Jesus, is there hope and comfort. So keep us close to Thy side all the day, and in the evening lay Thy hand of blessing on us as we go to rest. We ask in the name of our Master.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Sons of God.*

Belief in God will always seem difficult to the mind that holds a low conception of man. A God such as religion requires—a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God, a forgiving and self-sacrificing God, a companionable Providence in all the ways of life—the reality of such a God implies a peculiar dignity in man. To justify so intimate and tender a relation, man must be no less than such a God's son. Let us not fear through Christ to claim our descent from God and our heirship of His promise and grace.

✣

Scripture—Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is.—*1 John 3:2.*

✣

Follow you the star that lights a desert pathway, yours and mine,
Forward, till you learn the highest Human Nature is divine.

—ALFRED TENNYSON ("Locksley Hall.")

✣

Prayer—We are made very humble, our Father, by the honor Thou hast put upon us in our high calling in Christ Jesus our Lord. To us who are but weak and wayward Thou hast opened the gates of life and of service, and we grow daily more confident of our ability, by Thy help, to live the holy life. Our Father, aid us to aspire to the best that human life has revealed of possibility. We should like ourselves to find the way of peace, of progress and of power. May our desire to be like Christ so control our actions that we may prove the promise that even here we may become truly the sons of God, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. In his name we pray.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*Into the Light.*

To Christian experience Jesus has become the great illuminator of all dark places of the world. His presence in the soul, his companionship, lightens the path far ahead and to the uttermost stage of the journey. The darkness of sorrow, the shadow of doubt, the confusion of baffled purposes all yield to the light that shines in his face. And the pall of death is pierced by his beams, so that, at the end of the way, they who walk with him by their side walk into a light more bright than earthly noon.

✣

Scripture—Again therefore Jesus spake unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. —*John 8:12.*

✣

O Lord of Light, steep thou our souls in thee;
That when the daylight trembles into shade,
And falls the silence of mortality,
All is done—we shall not be afraid,
But pass from light to light; from earth's dull gleam
Into the very heart and heaven of our dream.

—RICHARD WATSON GILDER ("Undying Light.")

✣

Prayer—Our Father who art in heaven, we desire to have our way made plain by the clear shining of the Light of the Word upon our path. Save us from darkness and doubt, and may the presence of the Christ in our lives make evident the road we take and the meaning of our experiences. We thank Thee for our daily blessings, for food and raiment, and for the friendships which enrich our lives. We accept these gracious blessings as from Thee, and want to order our conduct so that we may please Thee, our God and Friend. Hear us for Jesus' sake.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*Love's Endurance.*

A strange paradox it is that the world's heavy burdens and its supreme undertakings should rest upon love, the most tender and delicate, and the most fragile, emotion of our soul. But this is the tribute matter must pay to spirit. It is love, and the faith that always goes with it, that gives vision and strength and endurance to all our efforts. Love never tires. It draws upon hidden depths of power. It is self-renewing, having meat to eat that a loveless soul knows not of. Love gives wings to leaden feet, freshness to drooping eyes, inspiration and vision to perplexed and flagging thoughts, and multiplies by ten the strength of him whose heart is pure.

✚

Scripture—Love never faileth....And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love.—*I Cor. 13:8, 13.*

✚

There is a life that remains ever young,
All through the day, all through the day,
Singing at evening the song it has sung
All through the length of the day;
Love is the glory that never grows old,
Telling the story a hundred times told,
Keeping it light where the shadows have rolled,
All through the length of the day.

—GEORGE MATHESON ("What Never Grows Old.")

✚

Prayer—Our heavenly Father, out of the hatreds and suspicions of the past our Savior has brought us the news of the love that never fails. We rejoice in that message of his, and we covet for ourselves the spirit of good will and love which shall not be defeated by misfortune nor overthrown by any form of difficulty. We thank Thee for this holy day and the privileges of Thy house. May we worship as those who have tasted of the good things of the Kingdom of God and the powers of the world to come. —*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*Water from the Rock.*

We are none of us independent of the springs of life that are in God. He is the environment which is essential to our being. Like pilgrims in the desert, we must have water or we perish. Daily refreshments from the living Rock is a divine necessity. Nor is this a mere figure of speech. All the saints have found their need of Him. And for the asking, the outflow of His grace may be drunk in by every thirsty soul. Water for freshening of spirit and for cleansing is abundant, and waits but the stretching forth of the importuning hand.

✚

Scripture—The Lord thy God....who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint.—*Deut. 8:14, 15.*

For they drank of a spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ.—*1 Cor. 10:4.*

✚

O living will that shall endure
When all that seems shall suffer shock,
Rise in the spiritual rock,
Flow through our deeds and make them pure.

—ALFRED TENNYSON ("In Memoriam.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we are often thirsty in a dry and barren land where no water is. All our springs are in Thee. Thou hast been to us in days gone by as rivers of water in a dry place and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Lead us to the rock that is higher than we. May the streams of refreshment and renewal flow out for our thirsty souls. May we look to the Christ, our Master and Savior, for comfort and guidance, and may we find at length rest and contentment in the holy place of God, toward which we make our journey.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*The Vision of Paradise Regained.*

In the deepest sense, below all question of fact and fiction, we know that the story of Eden is true. For we ourselves have tasted the forbidden fruit, lured by the lesser good, and found ourselves outside the guarding gates. Yet are we not without hope, for in the mighty struggle between the good and evil in life One has come our way who has the power of victory. In his strength and with his help we dare hope that we may win back that Garden of God, and eat of the Tree of Life.

✠

Scripture—And he placed at the east of the garden of Eden the cherubim and the flame of a sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.
—*Gen. 3:24.*

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.—*Gen. 3:15.*

✠

Still before Eden waves the fiery sword,
Her Tree of Life unransomed: whose sad Tree
Of Knowledge yet to growth of Calvary
Must yield the Tempter,— Hell the earliest dead
Of Earth resign,— and yet, O Son and Lord,
The seed o' the woman bruise the serpent's head.

—DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI ("The Holy Family.")

✠

Prayer—Gracious God, we praise Thee that out of the disaster which has been wrought in the world by selfish and willful deeds Thou hast caused the light to shine from the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. We praise Thee for the wonders of that victory which righteousness is slowly gaining over the forces of evil. Teach us, we pray Thee, that the blessing of Thy presence can only be worthily obtained through struggle and cleansing. Aid us to accomplish in the strength of our Master the conquest of evil. We ask for Christ's sake.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*Friends of the Master.*

It is no servile relation in which we stand to our Lord. He does not impose his will upon us from some cold height of superiority. Rather, he makes us his friends, taking us into his confidence, yearning not merely that we shall do his will but that we shall share his mind, so that in all our work we may have the vision, the motives, and the joy that he had in his work. This is why our discipleship to him is so inspiring, and why the service we give him is so sweet to our hearts. It is the service of friendship, of partnership, of love. Responding to his winsome and trustful advances our heart delights all the more to own him as its Master.

✚

Scripture—Henceforth I call you not servants; but I have called you friends.—*John 15:15.*

✚

Behold Him now where He comes!
Not the Christ of our subtle creeds,
But the light of our hearts, of our homes,
Of our hopes, our prayers, our needs;
The brother of want and blame,
The lover of women and men,
With a love that puts to shame
All passions of mortal ken.

—RICHARD WATSON GILDER ("The Passing of Christ.")

✚

Prayer—Father of mercies, we adore Thee for the fulness of Thy love manifested in Jesus, our Lord. We marvel at the easy, human friendliness with which he entered into the lives of those he met in the days of his flesh. Forbid that we should mistakenly hold him at too great distance from our actual life. We would cultivate the habit of carrying all our problems into his genial presence, expressing our own thoughts without fear, and listening to his words of light and healing. Make us worthy of him, and may the mind that was in him be in us also.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*Inner Destinies.*

It is not necessary for one to construct any scheme of prevision to forecast his own future estate. Our soul itself is the unfailing index of its destiny. We carry within ourselves the prophecy of our future, either good or evil. Those who live in nearness to God, and with purity, honor, loyalty and sympathy as their ideals, are already living the heavenly life, which needs only the expansion of eternity to be complete. Those who are selfish, unsympathetic, perverse and wilful are already kindling the fires of hell for themselves.

✚

Scripture—Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.—*Acts 1:25.*

✚

I sent my soul through the Invisible
Some letter of that After-life to spell:
And by and by my soul returned to me
And answered, "I myself am Heaven and Hell."
Heaven but the vision of fulfilled Desire,
And Hell the shadow from a Soul on fire.

—OMAR KHAYYAM ("The Rubaiyat.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we thank Thee that we live in a moral universe where freedom and self-determination are our heritage. Yet we realize how this fact deepens our responsibility, for the choices we make from day to day shape our future, here and hereafter. Help us to understand something of the infinite possibilities which are offered us. The heights we may reach or the depths to which we may descend are of our own deliberate selection. Save us, we beseech Thee, from the tragic mistake of taking the wrong course. In the name of our Savior we ask.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Deepening of Autumn.*

There is a certain pathos in the changing of the season from the brightness and vitality of summer to the sombre monotone of winter. A great life has passed into silence, the glorious spirit of an eventful year, and there remains only the requiem of winter winds and snows. Falling leaves and cloudy skies tell their plaintive story of a disappearing autumn. Yet these are but the superficial moods of an order of nature to which all seasons are alike good, and the outer garments of a God of grace and love.

✚

Scripture—And the clouds return after the rain. —*Eccl. 12:2.*

The leaf fadeth from off the vine, and the fading leaf from the fig tree.—*Isa. 34:4.*

✚

These are the days when the birds come back,
A very few, a bird or two,
To take a backward look.
These are the days when skies put on
The old, old sophistries of June,
A blue and gold mistake.

—EMILY DICKINSON ("Indian Summer.")

✚

Prayer—O Thou, who hast given us this fair world in which to dwell, we bless Thee for its beauty and its adaptation to our needs. We thank Thee for the maturing season with its fruits, which speak of the blessings of God. Teach us the lesson, our Father, that all the experiences of the year are necessary to the welfare of mankind, and that not less needful are the various incidents of joy and sorrow that befall us on the highways of our lives. Help us in gratitude and good courage to persevere to the end. In the name of Christ Jesus, our Lord.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*Increasing Day.*

From the Christian point of view the world is very young. Time is but at the dawn. The wonderful achievements of man and of divine providence as recorded in history are but the index of a mighty book whose greater chapters are to be written in future generations. And even the failures and lapses of past and present humanity—these all in the divine summing up will reappear transmuted and purified by God's creative wisdom and His redemptive grace. It is God's world that we live in. He will not see it fail. From age to age His purposes will ripen and His light increase.

✚

Scripture—Moreover, the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that Jehovah bindeth up the hurt of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound.—*Isa. 30:26.*

✚

My own hope is, a sun will pierce
The thickest cloud earth ever stretched;
That, after Last, returns the First,
Though a wide compass round be fetched;
That what began best, can't end worst,
Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst.

—ROBERT BROWNING ("Apparent Failure.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Through another week Thou hast brought us in safety, and we acknowledge before Thee our gratitude for all Thy goodness. Give to us faith in the future. Help us to believe that the best of life is yet to be. May we see Thy purposes in all events. May the lessons of the past bring to us wisdom and assurance. And may our lives become increasingly useful and happy under Thy gracious blessing. We pray in the Redeemer's name.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*Rest Through Worship.*

Unlike the Sabbath of the Old Testament, which emphasized rest, our Christian Lord's Day emphasizes worship as the appropriate way of keeping the day. In this the Christian ideal is not a displacement but an enlargement of the earlier ideal. For the rest we need is not mere inactivity, but renewal and refreshment of soul. Our worship on the Lord's Day should mean to us the re-energizing of our powers through inspiring thoughts which relax our nervous tension and bring calmness and patience and trustfulness, as well as freshness of purpose, to our burdened lives.

✚

Scripture—This is the rest, give ye rest to him that is weary.—*Isa. 28:12.*

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.—*Rev. 1:10.*

✚

To rest from weary work one day of seven;
One day to turn our backs upon the world,
Its soil wash from us, and strive on to Heaven,—
Whereto we daily climb, but quick are hurled
Down to the pit of human pride and sin.
Help me, ye powers celestial, to come nigh;
Ah, let me catch one little glimpse within
The heavenly city, lest my spirit die.

—RICHARD WATSON GILDER
("To Rest from Weary Work.")

✚

Prayer—Holy Father, we praise Thee for this day of rest and worship. Its memories are very precious to us. The great events in virtue of which our salvation has been made possible come to mind with freshness and inspiring power on this Thy holy day. We bring our offerings of thankfulness to Thee. We enter Thy sanctuary with gratitude. May the worship of God and the fellowship of His people bring us to higher levels of holy living, and to a truer knowledge of that faith by which we are redeemed. We ask in Jesus' name.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*The Holy Mother.*

The holiest thing in our round of human life is motherhood. There is no function so beautiful, so sacrificial, so enduring as this. To go down to the deeps of life, at great cost of suffering and peril, and bring up a fresh soul from the infinite mystery of being, is the supreme adventure. The story of the incarnation is precious to us not only because it portrays the beginning of the human life of God, but because it sets Jesus and his mother in the order of our human life. In that divinely beautiful recital motherhood and childhood are lifted to immortal honor.

✚

Scripture—And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she lifted up her voice and said, Blessed art thou among women.—*Luke 1:41, 42.*

✚

The seven-thorn'd briar and the palm seven-leaved
Are her great sorrow and her great reward.
Until the end be full the Holy One
Abides without. She soon shall have achieved
Her perfect purity; yea God the Lord
Shall soon vouchsafe His Son to be her Son.

—DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI
("MARY'S GIRLHOOD.")

✚

Prayer—Divine Father, we thank Thee for the human life of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the marvelous experience of motherhood which brought Jesus into our humanity, all womanhood is honored by the story of Mary. May her patient love, her yearning tenderness for the son whom she so much honored, and the sufferings through which she passed as he went onward from the manger to the cross, be the inspiration and comfort of all women whose lives are devoted to the ministries of the home, and whose sympathies go out to the sorrows of the world. We ask for Thy name's sake.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*The Crown of Thorns.*

Any view of life that holds sin lightly is shallow and false beyond characterization. Against all such deceptions our soul should be continually on guard. In the gospel story we have not only God's estimate upon sin, but humanity's estimate also; for men of unperverted instincts have ever responded with confirming assent and self-compunction to the picture of sin there disclosed. To steep our minds in the story of that tragedy which human sin brought upon our Lord, to see his face in Gethsemane, at the morning fire when Simon denied him, before his accusers and his judge, as he was wearing the crown of thorns, and as he was bearing his cross to death—to see all this with quick and vivid imagination is to fix forever in one's soul the tragedy and terror of sin.

✚

Scripture—And they platted a crown of thorns and put it upon his head.—*Matt. 27:29.*

✚

My sin was as a thorn
Among the thorns that girt Thy brow.

—ALFRED TENNYSON ("Supposed Confessions.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, the story of our Savior's suffering at the hands of his foes has touched our hearts with sympathy and sorrow. And yet we know that our sins are to him a fresh crown of thorns, and that our iniquities have nailed him anew to the cross. Help us, we pray Thee, to understand the cost of sin, and to seek to free our lives from the errors of flesh and spirit. May we not hesitate when to us there comes the summons to suffering and service. May we gain our place as children of God by fellowship with our Savior in the redemptive work of his life. We make this our prayer in his name.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*Rivers from Eden.*

Out of that mystic garden, where Hebrew seers affirmed our life began, went four fair streams to find the utmost reaches of the world. Is this not a gracious token of the widening current of God's grace, that flows outward from the diviner Eden to make rich and fertile the waste places of the earth? There is no land that needs not the freshening of such a stream. There is no continent where men are without the thirst for the water of life. May the waves of these widely spreading rivers water ere long the great world everywhere.

✚

Scripture—And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became four heads.—*Gen. 2:10.*

✚

> And, now divided into four main streams,
> Runs diverse, wandering many a famous realm
> And country, whereof here needs no account;
> Rolling on orient pearl and sands of gold,
> With mazy error under pendant shades
> Ran nectar, visiting each plant, and fed
> Flowers worthy of Paradise.
>
> —JOHN MILTON ("Paradise Lost.")

✚

Prayer—Father in heaven, Thou hast revealed Thyself to us in very gracious words and in acts of kindness past all our deserving. Thy mercies flow forth through the gardens of our lives like rivers of blessing. We rejoice in this fulness of Thy kindness to us, and we would seek to make the world in which we live more truly a place of good in which God may dwell. And may the stream of righteousness whose waves are the lives of holy men and women, move onward for the enrichment of the world like the river of God.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*The Greatness of Christ.*

Of the many aspects of Jesus' greatness none seems more impressive than his unique merging of superiority and comradeship. He was above his disciples, and yet he always walked by their side. He was their Lord and teacher, but their contacts with him, while always reverent, were warm with the most friendly intimacy. To them and to all he was the most accessible of men. He was at once the object of august devotion and of the deepest and friendliest affection.

✚

Scripture—That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes... and our hands have handled, of the Word of life.
—*I John 1:1.*

✚

But Thee, but Thee, O sovereign Seer of Time,
But Thee, O poet's Poet, Wisdom's Tongue,
But Thee, O man's best Man, O love's best Love,
O perfect life in perfect labor writ,
O all men's Comrade, Servant, King, or Priest—
What *if* or *yet*, what mole, what flaw, what lapse,
What least defect or shadow of defect,
What rumor, tattled by an enemy,
Of inference loose, what lack of grace
Even in torture's grasp, or sleep's, or death's—
Oh, what amiss may I forgive in Thee,
Jesus, good Paragon, thou Crystal Christ?

—SIDNEY LANIER ("The Crystal.")

✚

Prayer—Father of mercies, we are amazed at the glory of Christ as he is revealed in the records of our faith and in the progress of the centuries. He has risen upon the world a sun of righteousness with healing in his beams. Like the apostle of old we look upon him only to fall down in adoration at his feet. Aid us, we beseech Thee, so to interpret him to our fellowmen by word and character, that his message may spread to all the world. We ask in his name.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*An Ancient Challenge.*

The men of Jesus' day wondered that one who came from a little town in Galilee could speak with such authority, and questioned his right. But in calm serenity of spirit he went about doing good, and the ages have passed from question to reverence in the presence of his mystic lordship of the souls of men. Today the same inquiry of the doubtful finds its answer in the triumph of the divine achievement.

✚

Scripture—And Nathaniel said unto him, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.—*John 1:46.*

✚

Comes any good from Nazareth?
The scornful challenge as of old
Is flung on many a jeering breath
From cloistered cells and marts of gold.

Comes any good from Nazareth?
Behold the mighty Nazarene,
The Lord of Life, the Lord of Death,
Through warring ages walks serene.

—MARGARET E. SANGSTER ("From Nazareth.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we thank Thee that Thou hast so manifested Thyself in the life of Christ Jesus our Lord that we are no longer disturbed by the strange story of his humble birth, but rather find in it a stronger link with our common humanity. May we count all experience worth while that gives us deeper insight into his life, and may we find our deepest satisfaction in his friendship and love. We ask in his name.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*Beauty and Light.*

The coming of the good message of Christianity into the world was like the breaking out of flowers in the desert, or the brightening of the dawn. Whether we think of its extension into the non-Christian lands, or of its increasing influence upon our own civilization, or its growing dominance in our own lives, it is a theme so inspiring that only gratitude and the serious purpose to aid in the great consummation are adequate attitudes of mind. To realize that we are honored with such a bestowal is to lift up our hearts in thankfulness and to unfurl our banners in the onward march.

✚

Scripture—The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. —*Isa. 35:1.*

Until the day be cool and the shadows flee away. —*Song of Songs 2:17.*

✚

And in the untraveled wilderness shall bloom
Life's perfect rose.
A heart divinely human through the gloom
Throbs like a guiding footstep, warms and glows,
Until the dark with day-spring overflows,
And the bowed heart is crowned with blissful doom.

—LUCY LARCOM ("Looking Forward.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we thank Thee for life and health and all good things. Thou art the giver of them all. Every good and perfect gift is from Thee. Thou makest the wilderness beautiful with Thy presence, and Thou dost lighten the darkness with the clear, shining of Thy face. Make straight paths for our feet, we beseech Thee, and lift up that which is fallen. Save us from evil thoughts and vain desires. And bring us at last in safety and in joy to the rest that remains for the people of God. We ask for Thy name's sake.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Sure Reward.*

The rewards offered by Christ to his disciples are not exterior prizes by which our courage and good behavior are purchased. Rather are they intrinsic to the very life of goodness itself. The Christian soldier is a volunteer, not a mercenary. His reward is in the triumph of the cause, the glory of his king, the inner satisfaction and grace which are always begotten in the soul by loyalty to the highest. And yet we know that accompanying these essential rewards there are by-products of Christian character—friendships, personal efficiency, and inner peace—which the world cannot give nor take away.

✚

Scripture—Every one that hath left houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit eternal life.—*Matt. 19:29.*

✚

Not for the eyes of men
May this day's work be done,
But unto Thee, O God,
That, with the setting sun,
My heart may know the matchless prize
Of sure approval in Thine eyes.

—THOMAS CURTIS CLARK ("A Morning Prayer.")

✚

Prayer—Father, we claim the privilege of praise, which is the joy of all Thy creatures. For the new week, for the day of rest and worship, and for every precious gift of Thine, we render Thee our thanks. Thou hast made us very rich with Thy favors, and we would make our lives responsive to the call of God to higher ground and to purer character. Thou hast promised us such honor in being Thy children as makes every burden seem light and every sacrifice nothing worth. In that high assurance lead us to the end of the way, and bring us to eternal life. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*Delusion and Reality.*

Many are the souls who walk habitually in a world of unreality. Some false ideal lodged itself in their mind in youth, perhaps, and twisted their conception of life so that true values are pale and unconvincing, while false values lure their energies into a world of artifice and sham. Above all things our soul should desire to deal with the true, the real. And in the end we shall be grateful to God for whatever measures He must use—the shock of a great fear, the laying upon us of an unescapable responsibility, a grievous humiliation in the eyes of our community, even the imminence of death—if they bring us to disillusionment with respect to the things that are seeming and artificial and false.

✚

Scripture—The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand forever.—*Isa. 40:8.*

I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee.—*Job 42:5.*

✚

"What a brave winning! Lo the idol ours."
When softly as the fingers of the wind
Unleaf the tallest trees, the fairest flowers,
So God with pity infinitely kind,
Strips the illusions, one by one, till fain
We are to trust His wisdom once again.

—MARIE MUMFORD MEINELL.
("The Soul's Autumn.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we thank Thee for every experience in life which removes from before our eyes the clouds and mists of illusion, and gives us to know the actual nature of life and Thy purpose for us. Save us, we beseech Thee, from self-deception. May we see things as they are. May we resent no trouble and turn aside from no hardship that yields to us a truer experience of Thy love and providence. We commit our ways to Thee. Lead us in the right way, and bring us home in peace at last. For Jesus' sake. —*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*The Miracle of Mastery.*

Our inner responsibility for our acts and our character is a fact beyond which we cannot go. Fatalism, appearing under many forms—in ancient philosophy, in theological creeds, in materialistic science—may talk as it pleases of the outer control of the will, but the soul knows that the secret of mastery is within. Our wills are ours—that is the last word of the moral life. Nay, not the last word—our wills are ours to make them Christ's! This act by which the soul passes over the keeping of its will to its Lord is the miracle whose working gives us the mastery of all things.

✚

Scripture—If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you. —*John 15:7.*

I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me. —*Phil. 4:13.*

✚

> And still depart
> From death to death thro' life and life, and find
> Nearer and ever nearer, Him, who wrought
> Not matter, nor the finite-infinite,
> But this main-miracle, that thou art thou,
> With power on thine own act and on the world.
>
> —ALFRED TENNYSON ("De Profundis.")

✚

Prayer—Amid the perplexities of this world we are often tempted, our Father, to distrust Thy love and to doubt our power to win holiness and joy. Save us from all such distrust. Teach us that our Savior has made clear our right to Thy friendship, and our power to do all things in his name. Give to us the sense of mastery over ourselves and all the evil of the world. May we share the calm courage of our Lord. So would we be like him, in whose name we ever pray.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*Recognition of Jesus.*

Our Lord has a way of appearing to us in unexpected places. He surprised Mary, who took him for the gardener. And the two disciples walking toward Emmaus at the end of the day, talked with him, supposing he was some wayfaring stranger. He greets us likewise in the garden when our hearts are desolate, and walks with us in the evening way when we are pondering earnestly the experiences of the day. But, like the disciples, our eyes are holden, and we do not know him. It is often in some homely token that he makes his self-disclosure—as the speaking of our name or the breaking of bread.

✚

Scripture—When she had thus said, she turned herself back and beholdeth Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus....Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turneth herself and saith unto him...Master.—*John 20:14, 16.*

✚

Ay, the ray
Shed from those gentle eyes flushed my stilled soul
With such a glow of glory, such delight
Of sudden seeing, as if I had been
An Apennine, touched single by the Sun,
Dyed rose-red by some earliest shaft of Dawn,
While all the other peaks were dark, and slept.

—SIR EDWIN ARNOLD ("Mary Magdalene.")

✚

Prayer—Holy Father, our Guide and Friend, we have shared the sorrow of Mary of old, for we too have thought at times that we had lost our Master and should not see his face again. Yet out of every time of despondency he has brought us again by the glory of his presence and with the cheer of his word. We have heard his voice saying, It is I, be not afraid. May we never miss the joy of his recognition, but may our intimacy with him grow until we know him as we are known.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*The Cry for God.*

Our soul is made for God and is restless and athirst until it finds Him. Experience shows us that God, and only God, is the true life of the soul. He is the root and source of all our loves, our interests and our ideals. And our loves, our interests and our ideals carry us far beyond themselves, to Him in whom they find completion. How sad is it if through some inhibition of will or intelligence we shut God away from our heart!

✚

Scripture—O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek thee. My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and weary land, where no water is.—*Psalm 63:1.*

Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.—*John 14:8.*

✚

O somewhere, somewhere, God Unknown,
Exist and be!
I am dying; I am all alone;
I must have Thee!

God! God! my sense, my soul, my all,
Dies in the cry:
Saw'st thou the faint star flame and fall?
Ah! It was I.

—F. W. H. MYERS ("A Last Appeal.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, the longings of our souls after a vision of Thee assure us that we share the strong desire of all men of faith to know God. Our hearts cry out for Thee. We are made in Thine own image, and we cannot be satisfied without the clear shining of Thy presence. Our divine Father, we prize this longing for Thee as the best proof of our upward progress. If we were not in some true sense Thy children we should not yearn for Thy love. Deepen, we pray Thee, this thirst for Thyself, that Thou mayest satisfy us with Thy mercy now and ever.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Assured Future.*

If it is our privilege to enter into others' labors and gather the harvest of others' sowing, so it is our glory to labor and sow that others who come after us may rejoice. Our faith in the future finds support in our knowledge of the past. God links the generations together in a league of faith, each age looking forward to the next, and building for it in hope and dream a dwelling which becomes habitable only when its builders have passed.

✚

Scripture—For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.—*2 Cor. 4:17.*

Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.—*Luke 12:32.*

✚

I have not seen, I may not see,
My hopes for man take form in fact,
But God will give the victory
In due time; in that faith I act.
And he who sees the future sure,
The baffling present may endure,
And bless, meanwhile, the unseen Hand that leads
The heart's desire beyond the halting step of deeds.

—JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER
("The Last Walk in Autumn.")

✚

Prayer—We adore Thee, Thou ever living God, for this day and the strength we have to do our work. If it were not for the daily blessings of our Father, we should be too weak to master the duties of the way. But we are able with Thy help to take one step at a time. And we trust Thee for tomorrow's portion of guidance and power. In the promises of our Savior we find comfort. Save us from letting go of his hand or giving up his protection. We want to live nobler and purer lives each day. Help us to come to our desires. For we ask it in his name.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*Accepting God's Way.*

The noble art of surrendering to God is at once the secret of peace and the source of strength. Our restless, inconstant will, if it finds no master, is the fomenter of disquiet and weakness in our soul. But if it be found of the master Will, and yields, there comes into the soul the peace that passeth understanding and the strength that works the impossible.

✚

Scripture—Not as I will but as thou wilt. —*Mark 14:36.*

✚

"Not as I will!" — the sound grows sweet,
Each time my lips the word repeat;
"Not as I will!" — the darkness feels
More safe than light when this thought steals
Like whispered voice to calm and bless
All unrest and all loneliness.
"Not as I will!" because the One
Who loved us first and best has gone
Before us on the road, and still—
For we must all His love fulfill—
"Not as we will."

—HELEN HUNT JACKSON ("Not As I Will.")

✚

Prayer—Holy and righteous Father, we have followed too much the desires and devices of our own hearts. We have left undone the things we ought to have done, and we have done the things we ought not to have done, and there is no health of spirit in us. But Thou, O most merciful Father, look upon our weakness, and gird us with Thy strength. Aid us to put aside the pride and the passion of our hearts, and to cry out to Thee for mercy and forgiveness. Most of all may we submit our wills to Thine own, and ever learn to say, Thy will be done. We pray in Jesus' name.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Holiness of God.*

Only the vision of God's holy character can give us the true light wherein to see the realities of our own sinfulness and moral need. No soul that once fairly contemplates the righteous God whom we know as the Father of our Lord Jesus, can thereafter think triflingly or complacently of its own misdirections and shortcomings. The evil in our lives takes on a precision, a sharpness, a certain poignancy, when we see it in the light of God's presence. It is no longer evil, merely; it is sin. It is no longer possible to condone it, or to slur it over; it must be hated and repented of. And since our righteous God is the God of love, it is the vision of Him that leads us, by confession, to the forgiveness He longs to bestow.

✚

Scripture—I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up. Above him stood the seraphim. And one cried unto another and said: Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.—*Isa. 6:1-3.*

✚

Eternal Light! Eternal Light!
How pure the soul must be,
When placed within Thy searching sight!
It shrinks not, but with calm delight
Can live and look on Thee!

—THOMAS BINNEY ("Hymn.")

✚

Prayer—O Lord, may the spirit of worship and praise be ours today. We would join our songs with those of the shining ones about Thy throne. Help us when we enter Thy sanctuary to make it a place of holy thoughts and sincere devotion. We long for the peace and calm of Thy house, and for the message from Thy holy Word. May the gospel of Christ be preached with power this day throughout the world. And this we ask in his dear name.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*If We Knew*—

There are fundamentally two points of view from which to assess a given event or experience. We may ask, What does it mean for our immediate happiness? Or we may ask, What does it mean for character, and, therefore, for our ultimate and long-time happiness? One need not live long to learn that whatever else the world is made for, it is not made for the immediate gaining of soft, unearned happiness. Sorrow and bafflement meet us on every hand. God, therefore, holds some better thing in store for us. He means that through our present event and experience, which we would fain evade, we shall grow in moral strength of soul, and find thereby the kind of happiness that comes through discipline and wisdom and character. This is the happiness that endures. If we but knew what God holds in reserve for us—ah, if we but knew!

✣

Scripture—He knoweth the way that I take. —*Job 23:10.*

✣

If we could push ajar the gates of life,
And stand within, and all God's workings see,
We could interpret all this doubt and strife,
And for each mystery could find a key.

—M. R. SMITH ("God Knoweth Best.")

✣

Prayer—Gracious God, we are fenced about with limitation, mystery and trouble. At times we know not whither we should turn our steps. Our work seems little worth and our difficulties too great to be overcome. Yet if we could know as Thou knowest, we believe we should see the value of all our experiences, and know how life grows rich through the discipline of sorrow and of toil. We believe that Thou holdest the keys of life, and that in Thine own good time we too shall understand. Confirm our faith, for Christ our Savior's sake.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*The Ideal of Friendship.*

Our friends are so much a part of our own selves that we can no more afford unworthy friendships than we can tolerate unworthiness in any other aspect or organ of our personality. Friendship implies a certain blending of wills, a reciprocal acceptance of each other's ideals. If it is not this in some degree of reality, it is acquaintance, or association, or unselfish service, but not friendship. Through a true friendship life's chief inspirations come to our soul. We are held to our best ideals by the confidence and companionship of one who is worthy to share our inner life.

✚

Scripture—Faithful are the wounds of a friend. Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart. So doth the sweetness of a man's friend that cometh of hearty counsel. Thine own friend and thy father's friend, forsake not. —*Prov. 27:6, 9, 10.*

✚

The best friend is horizon, too,
Lifting unseen things into view,
And widening every petty claim
Till lost in some sublimer aim,
Blending all barriers in the great
Infinities that round us wait.
Friendship is an eternity
Where soul with soul walks, heavenly free.

—LUCY LARCOM ("The Inalienable Bond.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, Thou hast honored us past all our deserving in making us Thy friends. Aid us to choose aright our other friends, so that they may not be unworthy of Thy companionship. Aid us that we may render to all who love us the high services of true friendship. May we give and claim such inspiration and uplift from this fellowship as shall yield the best returns in character. And may the companionship of noble and generous natures in this world fit us for the friendships of eternity.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*The Hosts of God.*

This visible world with its temporal and material forces is enveloped and interwoven with an invisible world of spiritual presences and imponderable forces. To believe this, and to live in communion with these unseen realities, is to possess the life that is life indeed. It is in the unseen that all our problems are solved for us, that our sorrows are turned into joy, and that, at last, every issue is really decided. No falsehood or injustice established by visible force can abide, for against it the invisible armies of God lay unrelenting siege, until it gives way to righteousness and truth.

✚

Scripture—And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw; and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.—*2 Kings 6:17.*

✚

Their steps, their tones we cannot hear
Through fleshly barriers interposed,
We cannot see them standing near
Because our inner eyes are closed.

These opened, we might turn like him
Who stood beside the ancient seer,
And see the hosts of cherubim,
Rank over glittering rank, appear.

—THOMAS HEMPSTED ("The World of Spirits.")

✚

Prayer—O Thou Father of our spirits, the Source and Sustainer of our lives, we thank Thee that beyond the blessings of human fellowship, we have the favoring presence of divine forces all about us. Thou hast surrounded us with angels and ministers of grace for guidance, protection and comfort. Give us confidence and steadiness in the assurance of this truth, and may our eyes be opened to see the chariots of God upon the mountains.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*The Call to Prophethood.*

The world goes forward toward its divine goals through the leadership of prophets—in state, in church, in social life—who voice the will of God to men. These spokesmen of the Most High mark out new and untried paths and call upon us to walk therein. The prophet is no mere clairvoyant or foreteller of events; he is one to whose soul God has spoken some urgent truth, new or old, which men have not before conceived or have forgotten.

✠

Scripture—I have appointed thee a prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah Lord God! behold, I cannot speak; for I am a child. But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child; for to whomsoever I shall send thee thou shalt go, and whatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt speak. —*Jer. 1:5-7.*

Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink.—*Ex. 17:6.*

✠

Art thou not prophet nor leader? What then?
Smite! Become prophet! Thus God exalts men,
Smite first, strive first; let us see what avails.
'Tis trying succeeds, 'tis refusal that fails.
Delve down, if thou must, through the flintiest stuff.
So the water springs forth, thou art prophet enough!

—JAMES BUCKHAM ("Smiting the Rock.")

✠

Prayer—Dear Father, we thank Thee for the great and good men whom Thou hast called to be prophets of the faith. We are grateful that with divine insistence Thou hast summoned them to bear witness to the truth. We know that our times need prophets. Call Thy servants to noble service. And if we should hear Thy voice summoning us, may we arise and smite the rock that the waters may come forth for a thirsty world. In Jesus' name.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Revealing of the Sons of God.*

All enduring progress waits upon God's success in making and redeeming man. There is no mechanical device by which society or the State can cure the world's sorrow and injustice until God shall have brought forth a race of men fashioned in the likeness of his son, Jesus. The dream of a world order of peace and justice will come true only when a society of peace-loving and just men has been created through the spiritual forces of the gospel of grace.

✚

Scripture—For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God. —*Rom. 8:19.*

For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron; I will also make thy officers peace, and thy exactors righteousness. —*Isa. 60:17.*

✚

And other spirits there are standing apart
Upon the forehead of the age to come;
These will give the world another heart
And other pulses. Hear ye not the hum
Of mighty workings in the human mart?
Listen awhile, ye nations, and be dumb.

—JOHN KEATS ("Great Spirits Now on Earth.")

✚

Prayer—Divine Father and Redeemer, we have read the story of Thy self-revealing in the lives of men who were worthy to be called sons of God. We know that through such men all the noble institutions of society have been made possible. We look for still further embodiments of righteousness and truth in our social order, and these too, we know, must come through the revealing of a divine humanity. Glorify Thyself in the work of all Thy servants, and give such success to the gospel of thy dear Son that all the children of men may rejoice to claim their right to be sons of God.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*The Fight for Truth.*

It seems incredible that truth, the thing most precious in the world, has to make its way by militant measures against many adversaries. That truth should have foes at all seems incredible. But it does. And it calls for knightly champions to go forth with disinterested devotion to defend and interpret it against prejudice and complacency, against falsehood and perversion, and, perhaps more than all else, against lesser truths that too often stand in the way of God's fuller revelation.

✚

Scripture—Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.—*Eph. 6:10-12.*

✚

I therefore go, and join head, heart, and hand,
Active and firm, to fight the bloodless fight
Of science, freedom, and the truth in Christ.

—SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE ("Reflections.")

✚

Prayer—We praise Thee, our God, for the chance to put our strength to the test in the great and solemn warfare against ignorance, superstition, servitude, selfishness and all that is base and unlovely in human life. Like true soldiers of Jesus Christ, armed with the weapons of the Spirit, we would count ourselves happy in having a place in the struggle. And may our strength be in the Savior, who has led the fight and ever leads. In his name.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Vision of God.*

Let us not be misled by this word "vision," rich and indispensable as it is in the vocabulary of the spirit. It does not mean that God may be visualized as an object among the many objects of our outer world. We shall altogether miss the sight of Him if we seek such a disclosure. It is through the inner eye of faith and insight that we learn to interpret the events and experiences of our normal life as unveilings of the Father's face. Sweet glimpses of His presence come to us in our finer moods, when we are at prayer or public devotion, or when we do some service to His little ones.

✚

Scripture—Who is like unto thee, O Jehovah, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders.—*Ex. 15:11.*

He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.—*John 14:9.*

✚

Who that one moment has the least descried Him,
Dimly and faintly, hidden and afar,
Doth not despise all excellence beside Him,
Pleasures and powers that are not and that are—

Ay amid all men bear himself thereafter
Smit with a solemn and a sweet surprise,
Dumb to their scorn and turning on their laughter
Only the dominance of earnest eyes?

—F. W. H. MYERS ("St. Paul.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father and Friend, we have seen Thy glory in the wide universe about us, and have read of Thy holiness in the writings of holy men of the past. But we desire such personal fellowship with Thee through prayer and service that we shall have a sense of Thy presence and intimacy which nothing can disturb. On this holy day we would have the spirit of worship, and in Thy house may we find the companionship in divine things that our souls require. Feed us with the bread of life.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*The Soul's Mysteries.*

The contemplation of our myriad-minded humanity, with all its attainments of wisdom and power, is cause for wonder at the amazing amplitude of the soul's resources for good. But not less astonishing is man's capacity for mistake and error, when undirected or malicious. Who can fathom those mysterious depths from which good and evil alike seem to come? One alone has had the power to gaze down into the heart of man and discern aright its purposes. And he alone is competent to offer counsel in life's crises.

✚

Scripture—But Jesus did not trust himself unto them, for that he knew all men, and because he needed not that any one should bear witness concerning man; for he himself knew what was in man.—*John 2:24, 25.*

✚

No spirit in shape of light and darkness wrought,
No faith, no fear, no dream, no rapture, nought
That blooms in wisdom, nought that burns in crime,
No virtue girt and armed and helmed with light,
No love more lovely than the snows are white,
No serpent sleeping in some dead soul's tomb,
No song-bird singing from some live soul's height,
But he might hear, interpret, or illume
With sense invasive as the dawn of doom.

—ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE
("On the Death of Robert Browning.")

✚

Prayer—Father of all goodness, we adore Thee for the life Thou hast given us, and for the sense of worth and power that comes with our knowledge of Jesus. In contemplating the wisdom which he ever displayed we seem to grow wiser. In viewing the calm serenity of his daily life we gain new self-control and dignity. May his character have for us the ever-growing value of an example that is not wholly beyond our reach. And may no mistake or failure discourage us. We ask in his name.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*The Newer Truth.*

Truth is ever the same, because it is of the essence of things. But the manner of its disclosure has infinite variety. No two generations go to school to the same complex of experiences. No two days have the same discoveries of facts. The language of one age is obsolete and meaningless to another. The cycles of human interest vary with the years. It is the divine promise that fresh truth shall break out upon mankind in every tomorrow.

✣

Scripture—I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth. —*John 16:12, 13.*

Wherefore I shall be ready always to put you in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and are established in the present truth.—*2 Pet. 1:12.*

✣

Truth fails not; but her outward forms that bear
The longest date do melt like frosty rime,
That in the morning whitened hill and plain
And is no more.

—WILLIAM WORDSWORTH ("Mutability.")

✣

Prayer—O Lord, our God, early would we seek Thee. Our souls cry out for Thee, the living God. All things about us change with the years, but Thou remainest. From everlasting to everlasting Thou art God. Help us to prepare ourselves for the changes that life brings to us by firmer reliance upon Thine own abiding love. Help us to discern aright the new forms in which Thou givest us the truth. May we not be content with the old alone, dear and useful as it has been. But help us to seek ever the present truth, the truth for the day in which we live. For Christ the Truth's sake.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*The Glory of the Lord.*

It is difficult to accept the valuation which Jesus placed upon life, because we have been educated by many centuries of the world's love of pomp and display. He placed the supreme value in character and service, and was in no wise impressed by the things that gratify human vanity. Yet the passing years are proving that he was right, and the lives that we most honor are those that have held his estimate of reality rather than display.

✚

Scripture—And whosoever shall give you a drink of water because ye are Christ's, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.—*Mark 9:41.*

Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.—*Luke 18:37.*

✚

Not in robes of purple splendor, but in lives that do His will
In patient acts of kindness He comes still;
And the people cry with wonder, tho' no sign is in the sky,
That the glory of the Lord is passing by.

—WILLIAM J. DAWSON ("How He Came.")

✚

Prayer—Our holy Father, save us, we beseech Thee, from mistaking appearance for the real. We are in danger of being misled by forms and appearances. From such peril we take refuge in Thee and in the atmosphere of Christ's teaching and example. Help us to be sensitive to his presence, and to see in every manifestation of the spirit of good will and generous devotion among men something of the glory of the Lord. We ask in his name.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*The Clearer Sight.*

Our vision in this world is shaded; the perfect sight is God's alone. We can see only a little way, the atmosphere is not very clear, and our capacity to see is limited by our partial habits of observation. But we are always uplifted by the confidence that ere long we shall attain clearer insight into reality, and less cloudy perspective as we approach the perfection of the divine nature. In the light of God we shall see with undimmed vision.

✚

Scripture—Make thy face to shine upon thy servant. —*Psalm 119:135.*

Now we see in a glass dimly; but then face to face: Now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I have been known.—*1 Cor. 13:12.*

✚

> The One remains, the many change and pass;
> Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
> Life, like a dome of many-colored glass,
> Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
> Until Death tramples it to fragments.
>
> —PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY ("Adonais.")

✚

Prayer—We are humbled, our Father, by the thought of our fallible and faulty ways of looking at the world and our fellow-men. We so often misjudge, because we do not understand. Enable us, we beseech Thee, to cultivate the art of keeping ourselves in the light, where mistakes are less besetting. We would share something of the clear vision of our Master, and thus be earlier prepared for the undimmed glory of the heavenly life. We ask in his name. —*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Ever-Present Lord.*

The total number of the sayings of Jesus, as recorded in the Gospels, would make but a small volume. Yet they are the most profoundly important utterances we possess. No wonder men have searched eagerly to find other sayings of his, and have rejoiced when they seemed to be successful. One of these affirms his presence wherever he is sought, and this truth we confirm whenever we seek him in faith.

✚

Scripture—The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.—*John 6:63.*

Lo, I am with you alway.—*Matt. 28:20.*

✚

Hear the Master's risen word!
Delving spades have set it free,—
Wake! the world has need of thee,—
Rise and let thy voice be heard.

Gospel for the heavy-laden, answer to the laborer's cry;
"Raise the stone, and thou shalt find me; cleave the wood, and there am I."

—HENRY van DYKE
("A Lost Word of Jesus.")

✚

Prayer—O Lord, our gracious Father, we thank Thee for the gift of Christ, who for us men and our salvation took upon himself the lowly ministry of humanity, and passed through the deeps of life. We need his presence every passing hour. Help us to find comfort and assurance in his promise to be with us in every moment of our need, and to be found of all that seek after him in truth. We ask in his name.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*Body and Soul.*

We are long past the day when the human body was thought of as base, and a thing to starve and punish for the glory of God. Today we are taught to think of the body as a sacred instrument of life, a support and foundation of the soul. To give heed to its health is increasingly a part of our religion. To make it efficient and responsive in carrying out our ideals is as essential to our moral life as the cultivation of the ideals themselves. Happy are we if with all our direct care and culture of the body we do not neglect those curative and strengthening influences that spring out of inner spiritual soundness and purity of thought.

✠

Scripture—I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service. —*Rom. 12:1.*

✠

Let us not always say,
"Spite of this flesh today
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole."
As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry, "All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!"

—ROBERT BROWNING
("Rabbi Ben Ezra.")

✠

Prayer—Holy and righteous art Thou, O Lord, and in Thine own image hast Thou fashioned us that we should render Thee a service worthy of Thyself, and at last attain to Thine eternal companionship. We stand in wonder at the house of flesh in which we dwell. How manifold is Thy wisdom displayed in its building. Inspire us with a fine reverence for it, which shall save us from all sin against it, and shall give us a desire to help and heal our fellowmen, even as did our Lord. And in his name we pray.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Glory of the Church.*

The prophets of ancient Israel dreamed of a greater and more beautiful Jerusalem, the home of righteousness and peace. The early friends of Jesus could think of no fairer symbol of the church that was to be than the same holy and beloved city. In the thought of the church throughout all the world this conception of the holy community as a city, compact and fair, has taken abiding form.

✚

Scripture—Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city.—*Isa. 52:1.*

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.—*Rev. 21:2.*

✚

City of God, how broad and far
Outspread thy walls sublime!
The true thy chartered freemen are
Of every age and clime.

One holy Church, one army strong,
One steadfast high intent,
One working band, one harvest song,
One King Omnipotent!

—SAMUEL JOHNSON ("City of God.")

✚

Prayer—Father of infinite mercy, let Thy blessing rest upon the church throughout the world. Heal its divisions, and give its members of every name and company, the spirit of love and brotherhood. Help us to advance the oneness of the body of Christ by cultivating the graces of good will and appreciation, and by cooperation for all holy ends with all those who love our Lord Jesus in sincerity. Hasten the day, we beseech Thee, when the war of creeds shall cease and the strife of opinions shall vex the church no more.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*The Joy of Humble Goodness.*

There is a way of living which puts emphasis not upon possessions, but upon character; which asks not great things for oneself, but for the cause of God; and which counts success not in notable achievements, but in the attainment of the modest and quiet spirit. That way the saints of all the years have followed. In the harmony of days spent with God they have found the beauty and the music of life. And in the completion of the humblest tasks they have found both honor and content.

✣

Scripture—I will praise the name of God with song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. The meek have seen it, and are glad: Ye that seek after God, let your heart live.—*Psalm 69:30, 32.*

For Jehovah taketh pleasure in his people; he will beautify the meek with salvation. —*Psalm 149:4.*

✣

Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart:
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea:
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free.
So didst thou travel on life's common way
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

—WILLIAM WORDSWORTH ("Milton.")

✣

Prayer—Holy Father, it is good for us to feel Thy nearness, for then our hearts are comforted and we cease to fret ourselves with the strife of the world. We find inspiration in the lives of those who have walked in humble ways, and yet have found the days full of sweet and solemn joy. Teach us the lesson of contentment. Save us from the worry of unsuitable desires. Enrich us with the graces of Thy children who have lived in the sunlight of Thy love, and make us worthy of nobler tasks in the life to come. —*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*The Lost Son.*

It is one of life's illusions that happiness is to be found in waywardness and self-indulgence. And it is a part of the sad experience of the race that youth seldom wishes to take counsel of those who have paid the hard price of experience, but prefers to try its own experiments in the quest for satisfaction. And it is the astonishing discovery of disillusioned years that God waits in patience and unfailing love until the soul, beaten, robbed and all but lost, comes to itself and turns wearily and afraid back to the Father's house, where there is bread enough and to spare.

✣

Scripture—And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight; I am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.—*Luke 15:21, 22.*

✣

Sad penitent, beloved of God thou art,
Thy wandering feet He welcomes home at night—
More dear than those who never did depart
Is the returning sinner, to His sight.

—LOUISE CHANDLER MOULTON
("The Prodigal.")

✣

Prayer—O Thou who dost welcome to Thy heart all who in penitence and faith turn their homeward steps to Thee, hear our prayer for all who have strayed from the way of good, and are living in the far country. Bring them to themselves again, and kindle within their souls such discontent and longing that they may turn from self and sin and take their way back to the Father's house. And when we pray this prayer, we pledge Thee our efforts to bring its answer. For we know that only thus can we pray aright. Turn our own hearts more fully to Thee, and, welcome us at last to the home eternal. For Jesus' sake.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*Nature's Voices—and God's.*

There is a mysterious and comforting companionship in nature. These heavens bending over us and looking down upon us with discerning, starry eyes; these waters of ocean, lake or river, with their many-toned voices by night and day; these hills rock-ribbed and ancient as the sun; these forests lifting their tossing heads in sunshine or in storm—they are all so old, so rich in experience, so kindly and so sympathetic that they surely must be conscious, in some dim and inarticulate way, that they are performing in our behalf the gracious work of God, who made them and through them speaks to us.

✚

Scripture—The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. —*Psalm 19:1, 2.*

✚

The silent skies are full of speech
For who hath ears to hear;
The winds are whispering each to each,
The moon is calling to the beach,
And stars their sacred wisdom teach
Of Faith, and Love, and Fear.

—PHILLIPS BROOKS ("A Carol.")

✚

Prayer—O Thou, who hearest all our words, and understandest our thoughts afar off, grant us, we pray, that quietness of soul in which the divine message may be heard. May we learn to shut out from our lives for some small part of each day all voices but Thine own. In the secret place comfort us until our troubles vanish away; in the cleft of the rock hide us until the storm be over-past. So may all solitude grow precious to us as it brings us nearer Thee, and all loneliness be banished in the joy and light of Thy countenance.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*The Permanence of the Unseen.*

We live in a world which seems to be made up of bodies, shapes, appearances. It requires an effort to convince ourselves that the things which are of greatest moment are those which we cannot see,—goodness, purity, constancy, faith and love. And even in those we love the most precious qualities are the mystic, hidden factors of personality which depend but slightly on the visible. If this be true of our material world, in which for a few years we tarry like pilgrims of the night, far more is it true of the real world of spiritual laws and life, the eternal world of God's presence. In that world we would learn to be at home here and now.

✚

Scripture—While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.—*2 Cor. 4:18.*

✚

What wish you, immortality?
Then of frail visions become the wooer.
Stone cities melt like mist away,
But footsteps in the sand—endure.

—FLORENCE WILKINSON
("The Things That Endure.")

✚

Prayer—Father, we are tempted to put our trust in the things we see. They are so near us, they seem so substantial, and we are blind to the beauty of the spiritual world. Yet teach us the meaning of Thy word, and do not be weary with us when we are very slow to learn this great lesson. We would take Thy word, rather than our own. Show us the true proportion of things; and make us ashamed of our sordidness and contentment with the lesser good. And give us the true riches at last.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Conquest of Trouble.*

We do not live in a cloistered and protected world, immune from difficulty. Sin and mistake, our own and that of those about us, will have their evil way with us, and bring us their bitter fruit. But trouble ought to be met frankly and with courage. To try to evade it, or to deny that it exists is but to double its power to torture us. To face it squarely, to challenge it to an instant issue that shall be decisive, this is the secret of all who have overcome.

✚

Scripture—But the salvation of the righteous is of Jehovah; he is their stronghold in the time of trouble. —*Psalm 37:39.*

These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.—*John 16:33.*

✚

When troubles march to meet you,
Salute them at the door.
Extend both hands to greet them,
Their worst will soon be o'er.
Beat down their stormy bugles
With your rejoicing drums,
And, mailed in lofty courage,
Accept whatever comes.

—MARGARET E. SANGSTER
("A Little Help.")

✚

Prayer—Holy Father, Thou art our Portion in life, and our exceeding great Reward. In Thy good pleasure we would pass all our days. In the strength Thou dost supply, we would meet all the troubles that oppose us. For Thy grace can sustain us in every time of need. Deliver us, we beseech Thee, from fear, from worry, and from an unquiet mind. Help us to realize that the worst of troubles met in the spirit of courage arid trust in Thee, is already half conquered. We pray in Jesus' name.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*The Beauty of Old Age.*

Modern times as compared to antiquity have tended to throw old age somewhat into the shadow. But the coming time will change this, and set things again in right proportion. For old age ought to be the richest and happiest period of life. If the years have been well spent, the mind stored with the opulent treasures of knowledge, taste and appreciation, and if character has ripened into grace and strength, old age is the full flowering of the years, the time of benediction, the crown and glory of life.

✚

Scripture—Or ever the silver cord is loosed, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.—*Eccl. 12:6.*

His eye was not dimmed nor his natural force abated. —*Deut. 34:7.*

✚

Still as the silver cord gets worn and slender
Its lightened task-work tugs with lessening strain,
Hands get more helpful, voices, grown more tender,
Soothe with their softened tones the slumberous brain.

Youth longs and manhood strives, but age remembers;
Sits by the raked-up ashes of the past,
Spreads its thin hands above the whitening embers
That warm its creeping life-blood till the last.

—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES
("The Iron Gate.")

✚

Prayer—Our loving Father, we thank Thee that as life goes onward to its maturity our sense of Thy presence grows more vivid and our need of Thee the greater. In the assured comfort of Thy love may we accept without regret the changes that the years may bring. Enable us to enrich our lives with the graces of gentleness, moderation and serenity, that we may prove, in our later years, a benediction to those who love us. And at last admit us into the richer life of Heaven. For Thy name's sake.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*New Worlds to Conquer.*

Life ever beckons us with the promise of new intellectual and spiritual adventures. There is an entire universe of truth and beauty waiting for our exploration. Nor does this depend upon journeys to distant places. The most limited environment offers a world of human interest and divine activity, a few flowers on the earth and all the stars in the sky. To find in each day's work and reading and social converse a fresh zone for discovery and enjoyment, for service and growth, is to share with all the children of God the mystic secret of power and progress.

✚

Scripture—I count not myself yet to have apprehended; but one thing I do; forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.—*Phil. 3:13, 14.*

✚

> I am a part of all that I have met;
> And all experience is as an arch wherethro'
> Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades
> For ever and for ever when I move.
>
> —ALFRED TENNYSON ("Ulysses.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, upon this holy day we lift our hearts to Thee in gratitude and praise. For all that the Lord's Day has meant to us in our Christian life, and for all its present worth, we give Thee thanks. We would worship Thee today in spirit and in truth, for Thou seekest such to be Thy worshipers. And we would lift our eyes to the far horizons of life, that we may know the breadth of Thy kingdom and may enlarge our interests. Save us from littleness, from satisfaction with the present, and from sin. For we ask in Jesus' name.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*The Departed, in Holy Service.*

It is impossible that we should think of our beloved dead as unconscious or unemployed. In the measure of the strength and skill for holy tasks which they gather in this life we may be confident that they are at work in some portion of the house not made with hands. To think otherwise would be to attribute a certain wastefulness to that divine administration of the universe whose highest law is service.

✚

Scripture—Having the desire to depart and be with Christ.—*Phil. 1:23.*

And his servants shall serve him.—*Rev. 22:3.*

✚

O strong soul, by what shore
Tarriest thou now? For that force,
Surely, has not been left vain!
Somewhere, surely, afar,
In the sounding labour-house vast
Of being, is practiced that strength,
Zealous, beneficent, firm!

—MATTHEW ARNOLD ("Rugby Chapel.")

✚

Prayer—In the fulness of Thy mercy, thou hast led us hitherto, our gracious God. The past has been Thy gift, the present is laid open to us by Thee, and the future Thou dost unroll before us as a scroll upon which still more worthy records may be written. We rejoice in the privilege of growth in knowledge and in power through all our days, and unto the life beyond. And as we think of those whom we have loved and who have passed into the higher presence and service of God, we are confident that they have found new and higher tasks to employ their maturing energies and satisfy their expanding desires. We pray that we may be worthy to share their blessed employments and to renew our own activities in a world without end.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*The Message of the Trees.*

It is inevitable that one should love trees, if he is in the least degree sensitive to the beauty and power of nature's children. To think of the long years of a tree's growth, feeling downward with its roots into the soil and among the rocks, stretching up for light and air, putting out year by year its thousands of leaves as so many delicate, lung-like breathing tissues, thrilling with the urge of its spring-wakened sap, growing in power and majesty, storm-strengthened on a windy site, and yielding itself at last with the joy of fulfillment to serve as beam or sill or mast—that is the picture which the prophets and psalmists loved to draw of the growing and serviceable life of the true servant of God.

✚

Scripture—For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, that spreadeth out its roots by the river, and shall not fear when heat cometh, but its leaf shall be green. —*Jer. 17:8.*

✚

Once again the pine-tree sung:—
"Speak not thy speech my boughs among:
Put off thy years, wash in the breeze;
My hours are peaceful centuries.
Talk no more with feeble tongue;
No more the fool of space and time,
Come weave with mine a nobler rhyme."

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON
("Woodnotes.")

✚

Prayer—Our loving Father, we would open our souls to all the messages that nature can bring to us. We are grateful for the world of beauty around us, and we find inspiration in the voices of wood and mountain and sea, which speak of Thy glory. May the trees have for us a gospel of patience, endurance and beauty. May our lives grow in strength and fair proportions, like trees beside living waters. So shall we praise Thee evermore.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*The Sterner Side of Love.*

In any true and noble love there inheres a certain principle of rational self-control. If this principle is disregarded love is degraded to mere sentimentalism. Worthy love seeks above all things the moral welfare of the beloved. Thus it not only gives, but withholds; it considers not only present comfort, but the long-run of happiness and character. While love entrusts the beloved with all things, it sets high standards of honor, and folds into every act of self-giving a silent demand upon the springs of chivalry and nobility in the soul. Any emotion, even though it pass by the name of love, is ignoble and false unless it has within it the structure and strength of truth and law.

✚

Scripture—Love is strong as death;...the flashes thereof are flashes of fire, a very flame of Jehovah.
—*Songs of Songs 8:6, 7.*

✚

True love is founded in rocks of remembrance,
In stones of forbearance, and mortar of pain,
The workman lays wearily granite on granite,
And bleeds for his castle in sunshine and rain.

Love is not velvet, not all of it velvet,
Not all of it banners, not gold-leaf alone.
It is stern as the ages, and old as religion,
With patience its watchword, and law for its throne.

—VACHEL LINDSAY ("Love and Law.")

✚

Prayer—O Thou infinite God, we have learned from Thee all that makes us worthy of living. In Thy life we live, and all Thy virtues awake in us the passion for likeness to Thee. Lift our human affections to higher levels, we pray Thee. Aid us to value rightly in those we love the invisible qualities which we find in Thee. Teach us to prize in our loved ones the possessions of which life and death cannot rob us. Then shall we render Thee more worthy service, and love Thee aright. We pray in Christ's name.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*The Rising of the Day-star.*

There is always an expanding glory of sunlight ahead. The purple mystery of dawn grows into the dazzling wonder of daylight; and before the dawn there is the morning star that heralds the approach of the fuller light. Upon this troubled and darkened world the Sun of Righteousness has risen. And yet the race perceives him faintly and imperfectly. He has come like the morning star, a sure harbinger of the glorious day to be. The nations shall come to his light and kings to the brightness of his rising. It is our high privilege to open our lives to the clear shining of his presence, that we may help the world to welcome the unfolding perfection of the day.

✚

Scripture—And we have the word of prophecy made more sure; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.—*2 Pet. 1:19.*

✚

So sinks the daystar in the ocean bed,
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky.

—JOHN MILTON ("Lycidas.")

✚

Prayer—Father of all mercies, Thou hast caused the light to shine upon the darkness of our way when we were stumbling upon the dark mountains and knew not where to go. In Jesus Christ, our Lord, the way of holiness and peace has been made clear to us. Through the shining of his beams upon our lives we have been delivered from the power of darkness and made children of the light. We thank Thee for the witness of the Scriptures and of history to his saving grace. But most of all we thank Thee for the coming of the Holy Spirit into our lives, and the rising of the Day-star in our hearts.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*At the Breaking of Day.*

In the darkness it is hard to meet our sorrows, for we seem alone, and we have the weariness of the body as an added burden. But with dawn comes a revival of courage. We have had time to think things through, to face the spectres of the mind, and to summon our reserves of power. Most of all, we have had time to pray, and we know that in our darkest hour God stands in the shadow keeping watch above His own. And so morning brings its comfort, as it did to the disciples of old upon the shore. So shall it be at last in that glad morning when the soul wakens and earth's shadows flee.

✚

Scripture—Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy cometh in the morning.—*Psalm 30:5.*

But when day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach.—*John 21:4.*

✚

They had toiled all night and caught nothing,
But Jesus stood on the shore,
In the glad gray light of the morning,
And His face was kind as of yore;

So all their trouble was over,
And ended the weary pain
Of the work that was unrewarded,
And their hearts had joy again.

—MARIANNE FARNINGHAM
("In the Morning.")

✚

Prayer—O God of truth and mercy, Thou hast made the outgoings of the evening and morning alike to rejoice. Thou hast manifested Thyself to us in morning watches as of old. When the night has seemed long and there was no cheering voice, we have beheld Thee in the person of our Lord, even as the disciples saw him of old, and the night has become light with the glow of morning. Even so do Thou come to us, good Father, when we need Thee most, and all our days shall be holy and good in the glory of Thy presence. We ask for our Savior's sake.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*The Comfort of God's Presence.*

It would be far better to believe with the faithful of ancient Israel that God is the author of all our misfortunes as well as our blessings, than to give Him no place at all in our lives. Jesus has made it clear that suffering is not to be borne in mere dumb resignation as the stroke of God's hand, and we are the richer for his lesson. But in all our personal trials and in the tumults and tragedies of our disordered world God is a fellow-sufferer, a companion in the struggle to bring in a better day, and to help us to achieve character and peace.

✚

Scripture—I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it. Remove thy stroke away from me; I am consumed by the blow of thy hand.—*Psalm 39:9, 10.*

Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.—*Psalm 73:25.*

✚

I would I never may be left of thee,
O God, my God, in whatsoever ill;
Be present while thou strikest, thus shall grow
At least a solemn patience with the pain:
When Thou art gone, what is there in the world
Seems not dishonoured, desperate with sin?

—F. W. H. MYERS ("St. John the Baptist.")

✚

Prayer—Dear Father, we know that Thou doest all things well and that no evil thing can abide with Thee. We know that our troubles come from our own shortcomings or the evil of the world. Yet sometimes we are betrayed into the belief that Thou hast sent our distresses to cleanse us of our sin, and we have even found comfort in the thought. But even if Thou hast afflicted us, do not leave us comfortless without Thy presence. Abide with us, dear Lord, and we will gladly bear any discipline that makes us worthier of Thee. For Jesus' sake.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Prayers of the Saints.*

Our holy faith has made plain to us the joy and efficacy of prayer. Jesus spent his days and nights in communion with the Father, and thus illustrated the divine necessity of prayer. But this fellowship with God is not a solitary service. It brings us into the company of that innumerable host of redeemed souls in all lands and in all the ages who have found the happy secret of worship. With them we make our way into the audience chamber of the Highest; with them we join in the joy and devotion of all the sons of God.

✚

Scripture—Pray without ceasing.—*1 Thess. 5:17.*

And another angel came and stood over the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should add it unto the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. —*Rev. 8:3.*

✚

Faint not before the unseen throne,
O wrestling soul that lifts thy prayer
'Gainst pendent clouds in vacant air,
Thou makest not thy plea alone;

A vial full of odors sweet,
A chosen angel's sacred trust;
The broken cry that rose from dust
With "incense much" becomes complete.

—J. H. LAIRD ("The Petitioner.")

✚

Prayer—O Thou, who art unseen but ever near, we offer Thee our thanks for this new Lord's Day. Our faith grows stronger and our hope revives at the thought of the house of God, and the fellowship of Thy people. We would draw near to Thee in worship today, and gain a firmer hold upon the life to come. And may prayer become a more precious privilege, bringing us to the presence chamber of the King. May the lifting up of our prayers be like the morning sacrifice. In Jesus' name, we ask.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*The Coming of the Snow.*

In the full volume of the year the cold and snow of winter have their essential place. The coming of the white mantle of snow to cover the earth has always brought delight to children, a glow of satisfaction to those who enjoy each new change of the seasons, and a sense of the wonder of the universe to all who ponder the inexhaustible variety of nature. All this, too, is wrought by the hand of God, who makes everything beautiful in its season.

✣

Scripture—Great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend. For he saith to the snow, Fall thou on the earth.—*Job 37:5, 6.*

✣

The snow had begun in the gloaming,
And busily all the night
Had been heaping field and highway
With a silence deep and white.

Every pine and fir and hemlock
Wore ermine too dear for an earl,
And the poorest twig on the elm tree
Was ridged inch deep with pearl.

—JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL
("The First Snowfall.")

✣

Prayer—Our gracious God, in Thy hands are all the forces of the world. For we know that behind and within all visible nature Thou art working out Thy holy will. We rejoice in the new ways in which Thy providence is made known. For the coming of the winter, for the snow that wraps the world in its folds, for all the quiet ways in which the great purposes of nature go forward through the months, we praise Thee. Only make us quick to hear the cry of need, and earnest in all friendly offices toward the poor about us. So shall these days bring to us opportunity as well as blessing. For Thy name's sake.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*Open the Door.*

Our studies of childhood and youth have confirmed the impression long cherished by the thoughtful that youth is the golden time of opportunity, and that life's choices for good or evil are made in the plastic years. To place the strength and ardor of youth as a priceless offering upon the altar of God, to open the door of hospitality to the supreme Friend, is to make sure that life's purpose shall not fail. Nor is there ever a time in maturer age when we may not by opening wider the door of our soul make Him more completely the Master within.

✚

Scripture—Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.—*Rev. 3:20.*

✚

Open the door of your hearts, my lads,
To the angel of love and truth;
When the world is full of unnumbered joys,
In the beautiful dawn of youth.

Casting aside all things that mar,
Saying to wrong, depart!
To the voices of hope that are calling you,
Open the door of your heart.

—EDWARD EVERETT HALE ("Youth.")

✚

Prayer—Our lives are Thy gift, good Father, and into them Thou comest as we give Thee room. We have heard the entreating words of our Lord, asking us to receive him in Thy name, for he comes to speak to us of Thee. May we not set barriers before the entrance of our hearts, but open them to Thee and to all holy guests. Abide with us, dear Lord, and leave us not through all the day of life, for some of us are conscious that the day is far spent, and the night is at hand.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*The Treasures of Books.*

Any humblest book we take in our hands has a mute and yet eloquent story to tell of the ministry of writing all through the centuries, since men first expressed their thoughts in written characters. Whether on slabs of stone, on leaves of trees, on skins of beasts, on rolls of papyrus, or on the printed pages of books, the dower of the years has been gathered and preserved for our enrichment. In our books, whether few or many, costly or inexpensive, we have a silent companionship of our own choosing, our inspiration to noble living, and our unfailing friends.

✚

Scripture—Then read Baruch in the book.
—*Jer. 36:10.*

The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus bring when thou comest, and the books, especially the parchments.
—*2 Tim. 4:13.*

✚

Who hath a book
Hath but to read,
And he may be
A king indeed.
His kingdom is
His inglenook;
All this is his
Who hath a book.

—WILBUR D. NESBIT ("Books.")

✚

Prayer—We bless Thee, O Lord, for all the friendships with which our lives have been enriched. And among these companions of ours that have made the day inspiring are those who have spoken to us in the pages of good books. We have Thy Word in our hands, and many other volumes that have brought us the breath of life, and girded us anew for our daily tasks. Make such friendships increasingly dear to us, O our God, and through their help may we become worthy of enrollment in the Book of Life.
—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*Troubles That Do Not Come.*

Our humanity seems to have taken over as a part of its heritage from the animal world the habit of apprehension. Most creatures of the field and forest live in a constant state of fear and watchfulness. In the measure that man outgrows this primitive habit of anxiety he reaches the levels of self-control and freedom to which Christianity points the way. There is an attitude of proper forethought which is to be commended. But the apprehension which breeds only worry and weakness is inconsistent with the spirit of confidence which pervades our holy faith.

✚

Scripture—Be not therefore anxious for the morrow. —*Matt. 6:34.*

In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.—*Phil. 4:6, 7.*

✚

Some of your hurts you have cured,
And the sharpest you still have survived,
But what torments of grief you endured
From evils that never arrived!

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON ("Anxiety.")

✚

Prayer—Father of mercy, Thou hast saved us from many dangers of the way. We have trusted Thee, as our fathers did, and Thou hast not failed us. Save us, we beseech Thee, from the troubles that our fears alone make real. Give us faith to rely on Thy arm of power, and to put out of our souls all fear and misgiving. Then shall we be saved from most of our anxieties which are for ills that never come. Give us the calmness and the serenity of Jesus, our Lord, in whose name we pray.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Re-birth of the World.*

A profound seriousness has settled down upon Christian mankind as we contemplate in the after-light of a world war the shattered remnants of our too easy and complacent optimism. We had supposed that our Christianity had reached such a stage of development that war on a large scale would be henceforth impossible. Then with dismay we beheld the pillars and supports of our world of peace topple down. And though at first the faith of many hearts disappeared in the rude awakening, we are even now beginning to discern the outlines of a majestic stratagem of God, by which war is made to yield inestimable benefit to the world.

✚

Scripture—Behold, I make all things new.—*Rev. 21:5.*

For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered.—*Isa. 65:17.*

✚

Christ! What shall be delivered to the morn
Out of these pangs, if ever indeed another
Morn shall succeed this night, or this vast mother
Survive to know the blood-spent offspring, torn
From her racked flesh?—What splendour from the smother?
What new-winged world, or mangled god still-born?

—PERCY MACKAYE ("Christmas: 1915.")

✚

Prayer—Our confidence is in Thee, O Thou Savior of the lost. We confess with shame the presence of so much evil in the world, and that there is so much of that same evil in our own hearts. But we would share in the glory of bringing in a new world in which dwelleth righteousness and peace. Count us worthy of such a task, O our Father. Let us not fail of our high calling in this great hour of human history. Bless our leaders. Lighten their way before them, and hearten them for whatever effort their mighty task requires. And at last may we see the day dawn upon a world that is all Thine own. For Jesus' sake.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*Perverters of Good.*

Much of the evil in the world and in our lives arises less from deliberate purpose to do wrong than from maladjustment of motives and desires. We content ourselves with second-best things when we might have the best, and thus we frustrate our chance of the ideal. We compromise with the half-bad and make it our good; and so fail of the perfect. It is only by keeping in sight an inflexible standard of character that we can save ourselves from unconscious deterioration. The life of Jesus is that standard, not an unattainable ideal of the cloudlands, but a real companion and exemplar for the common ways of life.

✚

Scripture—Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. —*Isa. 5:20.*

✚

O purblind race of miserable men,
How many among us even at this hour
Do forge a lifelong trouble for ourselves
By taking true for false, or false for true?

—ALFRED TENNYSON ("Geraint and Enid.")

✚

Prayer—Holy Father, we acknowledge our proneness to err from the right way. We have followed too much the devices of our own hearts. We have too often perverted the good, and misnamed evil and sin. Count us not in the company of the unrighteous, but set our feet again in straight paths for Thy mercy's sake. Give us courage to hold with unfailing persistence to the things we know to be true, pure, honorable and of good report. And now bring us to the end of this week with Thy favor upon us, and hold our hands as the shadows fall.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*Love of the Highest.*

All the emotions and purposes of life lift themselves to their supreme expression in the sentiment of love. And love itself becomes the master-motive of life as it chooses the highest object of devotion. History records many romantic and thrilling examples of human love glorified by heroic deeds. But the noblest places are reserved for those who have made the love of God supreme in their lives, and have wrought deathless and unforgettable deeds in His name. And such a realization of holy love is within the reach of all who set their hearts on Him.

✚

Scripture—Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. —*Deut. 6:5.*

✚

Ah, my God,
What might I not have made of thy fair world,
Had I but loved thy highest creature here?
It was my duty to have loved the highest:
It surely was my profit had I known:
It would have been my pleasure had I seen.
We needs must love the highest when we see it.

—ALFRED TENNYSON ("Guinevere.")

✚

Prayer—Our God and Father, we crave the love that expands and enriches life. We know that this can come to us only as we choose the object of our love aright. Therefore we would love the Lord our God with all our hearts; thus we cannot fail of the highest object of love. We would make this day one of true enjoyment, our Father. In the place of prayer we would put from us all that speaks of other things, and abide content with the companionship of heaven. And so we would prepare ourselves for its joys. Through Christ our Lord.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*Forward!*

It is apparent to the least sensitive of us that we want to make progress in all the ways of growth. If we are children, we want to grow up. The facts of human history and the world's experience are accessible all around us, and we want to learn something more of them every day. There are interesting and inspiring people whose friendship will be rewarding, and we want to know them better. There is our life work, on which we wish to make progress. And most of all there is the ideal of a noble character toward which we are setting our souls. All life cries "Forward!" to us, and we must listen and obey.

✚

Scripture—Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward.—*Ex. 14:15.*

I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.—*Phil. 3:14.*

✚

March on, my soul, nor like a laggard stay!
March swiftly on. Yet err not from thy way
Where all the nobly wise of old have trod—
The path of faith made by the sons of God.
Follow, and honor what the past has gained:
And forward still, that more may be attained.

—HENRY van DYKE
("Song of a Pilgrim Soul")

✚

Prayer—Divine Father, though we do not see Thee with the eyes of the flesh, yet we perceive Thy presence when in the crises of life we turn to Thee for aid. Be Thou with us in all the pilgrim journey that we take. Lead us in a straight path, and divide the waters before our feet that we may come safely through. We would not stop, nor turn aside to ways that go astray. But right onward would we make our journey, till the goal is reached, and we are at home with Thee. This we make our petition in Jesus' name. —*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*The Certainty of Attainment.*

All life is an apprenticeship to the truth that we cannot know what the future holds in store. The events of a single day may wholly modify the program of a lifetime. The unexpected awaits us at the bend in the road. But there are some things of which we may be confident. Life is greater than chance. Character has eternal issues. The soul that fixes its confidence on God cannot be cheated of its purpose.

✚

Scripture—For the vision is yet for the appointed time, and it hasteth toward the end, and shall not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not delay.—*Hab. 2:3.*

I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. —*John 10:28.*

✚

I stay my haste, I make delays,
For what avails this eager pace?
I stand amid the eternal ways,
And what is mine shall know my face.

The stars come nightly to the sky;
The tidal wave unto the sea;
Nor time, nor space, nor deep, nor high,
Can keep my own away from me.

—JOHN BURROUGHS ("Waiting.")

✚

Prayer—It is of Thy mercies that we live and move and have our being, our Father in heaven. Day by day we receive from Thee the gifts by which life is made profitable to us. Yet there are greater blessings to which we aspire. We have visions of the future far beyond all we have known. And we trust Thee for these good things to come. Our Savior has told us that we shall not be taken from his care, and that we cannot fail of our highest desires. For these assurances we give Thee thanks, and we pledge ourselves to ever more earnest service in Thy name.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*The Soul's Cry for God.*

There are moments and moods in which we are oppressed with the sense of our distance from God. We know that our greatest need is His companionship, and yet we are dumb and inert. It is then that in our deepest soul there is uttered the unspoken cry for help. It is then that the Spirit of God voices for us the appeal of helplessness which we have no strength to express, and with groanings that we cannot utter. For such moments the divine grace is sufficient, and out of our weakness the strength of God is made perfect.

✚

Scripture—I have gone astray like a lost sheep: seek thy servant.—*Psalm 119:176.*

But the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.—*Rom. 8:26.*

✚

Because I seek Thee not, oh, seek Thou me!
Because my lips are dumb, oh, hear the cry
I do not utter as Thou passest by,
And from my lifelong bondage set me free!
Because content I perish, far from Thee,
Oh, seize me, snatch me from my fate, and try
My soul in Thy consuming fire! Draw nigh
And let me, blinded, Thy salvation see.

—LOUISE CHANDLER MOULTON
("Help Thou Mine Unbelief.")

✚

Prayer—Dear Lord, we are all too little moved to speak to Thee, though we feel our need of prayer. We remain silent, and miss the chance to know Thy power and love. We beseech Thee to come and take possession of us, even though we do not ask Thee. We are athirst for God, for the Living God, and yet we do not drink of the river of Thy mercy. Seek us even in the far country, and bring us back to the Father's house. Turn us unto Thee, O Lord. Look upon us in compassion and cause Thy face to shine upon us. We pray in the Master's name.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*Light at Evening Time.*

The order of nature brings the alternation of day and night. But the servants of God have always dreamed of a progressive social order whose symbol was a day that did not come to an end, but continued in growing brightness to a perfect splendor. In the increasing realization of such an age of good we live. Our evenings descend with the promise of a better tomorrow. Our hopes find fruition in the gradual attainment of our hearts' desire. Upon the world of our moral and spiritual life the sun ceases to go down, and at every evening time there is light.

✚

Scripture—It shall be one day which is known unto Jehovah; not day and not night; but it shall come to pass, that at evening time there shall be light.—*Zech. 14:7.*

The pathway of the just shineth more and more unto the perfect day. —*Prov. 4:18.*

✚

When, like a changing dream,
The long cloud-wedge,
Brown-gray,
Grew saffron underneath, and ere I knew,
The interspace, green-blue—
The whole, illimitable, western, skyey shore,
The tender, human, silent sunset smiled once more.

—RICHARD WATSON GILDER ("Sunset.")

✚

Prayer—Into the light of this another day Thou hast brought us, good Father, and we thank Thee for Thy care. We need Thee every hour of our lives. We try in vain to satisfy ourselves without Thee, for we are Thine offspring, and our souls long for Thy love. Abide with us all through the day, we pray Thee, that we may not be friendless and alone. And when evening shadows come and the sunset makes glorious the west, may we count it a sign of the evening of life, when in Thy love it shall be light.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Unspeakable Glory.*

It is one of our daily disciplines to learn that our lives are set around with humbling limitations. Around every circle that we draw a larger circle could be traced. Our strength is soon spent and our knowledge comes over soon to its bounds. And yet we are conscious that all about us there is a world of power and knowledge into which we may penetrate by the grace of God, and the friendship of Jesus. That world of spiritual laws and forces is our true inheritance, immeasurable by our mensuration and indescribable by our speech, but the veritable possession of all the children of God.

✚

Scripture—Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.—*1 Cor. 2:9.*

✚

How speech must fail, seeking to circumscribe
The purport of His mighty message here
With unavailing words; as if one dipped
A hand to empty deep green Galilee.

—SIR EDWIN ARNOLD
("The Love of God and Man.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, there have been moments in our lives when heaven seemed very near, and we were inspired with the sense of divine things about us. We believe that such good moments of vision and happiness might be oftener ours if we lived closer to Thee, and listened for Thy voice. Thou art so great that we stand in wonder at the least of Thy works. And yet Thou art very near to us, and Thy blessed companionship may be had for the asking. Give us courage and faith to enter more deeply into the mystery of Thy glory, and to bring the secret to our fellow men. In Jesus' name we ask.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*Our Spiritual Heritage.*

How clearly our faith links itself with the faith of our parents and our more remote forebears! If we were left to work out our spiritual life by our individual experience alone, the result would be scant indeed. But in this matter of our relation to God we are the heirs of all the ages, and especially of those who in our childhood and youth gave shape and course to our character. Riches they left us—of courage, and hope, and integrity, and trust in the guidance of God,—riches far transcending any material dower which they may have bestowed.

✠

Scripture—The unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded in thee also.—*1 Tim. 1:5.*

✠

And though his tribe be scattered to the wind
From the Atlantic to the China sea,
Yet do they think of that bright lamp he burned
Of family worth and proud integrity.

And many a sturdy grandchild bears his name
In reverence spoken, till he feels akin
To all the lion-eyed who built the world—
And lion-dreams begin to burn within.

—VACHEL LINDSAY ("The Proud Farmer.")

✠

Prayer—Holy One, who hast given us life and all of its benefits, we acknowledge our debt to Thee and to all the past. We look with humbled astonishment at all the work our fathers have done, and we understand something of the burden that lies upon us to be faithful to the heritage they secured for us. Help us not to disappoint those who have gone before us in the pathway of faith and sacrifice. May we be faithful to our land, to our dear ones and to our own souls, that so we may fulfill the high purposes that have been left us, and may leave to our own children names and possessions enriched by lives of sincerity and noble effort. —*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Name Above All.*

Into a world seeking through many religions for the true way to God, there entered the life of Jesus. Along the highways of trade, of war and of pleasure his name began to be heard. It was a new and wonderful name, which brought a new confidence and joy to the struggling race of men. Wherever it has gone it has brought freedom, knowledge and a better life. In heaven and earth alike it is the transcendent name. It is the name of humility, of service, and of salvation.

✚

Scripture—And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name.—*Phil. 2:8, 9.*

✚

The head that once was crowned with thorns,
Is crowned with glory now;
A royal diadem adorns
The mighty Victor's brow.

The highest place that heaven affords
Is His by sovereign right;
The King of kings, and Lord of lords,
He reigns in glory bright.

—THOMAS KELLY ("Crowned with Honor.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father in heaven, our hearts are filled with gladness at the thought of our Savior's glorious life. The shame and humiliation to which he submitted have long since been forgotten in the greatness of his exaltation. We hail him as our Master and Lord. We submit our lives to his direction and control. And on this holy day, that speaks of his return from the gates of death, we pledge him anew our loyalty and love. In his name we make our prayer.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*The Resistless Blessing.*

There is a power in the universe to be allied with which is the secret of efficiency and happiness. If we were dependent alone on our own insufficient strength, we should have little expectation of success. But in union with the power of God, all things are possible. Like Israel of old on the heights of Moab, the auguries are propitious, the forecast is hopeful, the future is irresistibly good. Committed to the leadership of Christ, we can do all things in him who strengthens us.

✚

Scripture—How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? And how shall I defy whom Jehovah hath not defied? Behold, I have received commandment to bless; and he hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it.
—*Num. 23:8, 20.*

✚

But, like the Midianite of old,
Who stood on Zophim, heaven-controll'd,
I feel within mine aged breast
A power that will not be repress'd.
It prompts my voice, it swells my veins,
It burns, it maddens, it constrains!—
O'ermaster'd yet by high behest,
I bless thee, and thou shalt be blessed!

—SIR WALTER SCOTT ("The Lord of the Isles.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, Thou hast led us in safety through the wilderness, and hast brought us to the borders of our land of promise. Thou hast turned our darkness into daylight, and the shadow of death into the dayspring of peace. We have seen the curse turned to blessing, and the rough ways made straight before our feet. For these mercies we thank Thee with full hearts, for they are but the assurance that we may trust Thee for greater things to come. We crave the continuance of Thy favor all through our lives until the journey's close. We ask for Thy mercy's sake.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*Winter's Breath.*

The cold of winter has its admonitions, like every other season of the year. It hints at the abounding mystery of the changing months, each one of which tells its own story. It brings the tingling of frosty air that sends the blood leaping on its way. It offers the comfort of dancing flames and fireside warmth. But most of all it offers the privilege of aid and cheer for the poor, to whom its coming is the signal of distress. And thus even the most forbidding days of winter bring their benediction.

✣

Scripture—Out of the chamber of the south cometh the storm, and cold out of the north.—*Job 37:9.*

He casteth forth his ice like morsels; who can stand before his cold!—*Psalm 147:17.*

✣

Like some lorn abbey now, the wood
Stands roofless in the bitter air;
In ruins on its floor is strewed
The carven foliage quaint and rare,
And homeless winds complain along
The columned choir once thrilled with song.

—JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL ("December.")

✣

Prayer—Through all the changes of the year Thou hast brought us in safety, our good Father. And we approach the end of the season with deep thankfulness that we have been kept in Thy loving care. Thine are all the gifts of the year; the beauty and fertility of spring, the warmth and fruitfulness of summer, the glory of autumn, and the cold and snow of winter. Help us to delight in each season, and to labor to make our lives complete in all the round of their fruitfulness. For Thy name's sake.—*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*From Sorrow to Gladness.*

God always reserves the right to show us unexpected help in the dark places. Holy Scripture records many examples of deliverance from distress. Sometimes this relief results from the turn of events that opens an unlooked-for way. Sometimes the soul summons fresh reserves of power by the help of God, and brings victory out of seeming defeat. And sometimes the very trouble itself, nobly borne, issues in a new fortitude and strength. In His own best way our Father may be trusted to turn our hardships to happiness.

✚

Scripture—They had rest from their enemies, and the month was turned unto them from sorrow to gladness. —*Esther 9:22.*

For our light affliction which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.—*2 Cor. 4:17.*

✚

Shall I look back, and see the great things small;
The toilsome path, God's training for my feet,
The pains that never had been worth my tears?
Will some great light of rapture, bathing all,
Make bygone woe seem joy; past bitter, sweet?
Shall I look back and wonder at my fears?

—LOUISE CHANDLER MOULTON ("Shall I Look Back?")

✚

Prayer—We have been amazed, O our God, at the way along which Thou hast led us. Often when we thought the road was too steep, the difficulties too great, the trials too heavy, we have obtained unexpected strength. And then we have looked back to see how our troubles were changed to blessings, and our sorrows to great joy. Even so do for us evermore. In every hour of difficulty aid us to commit our way to Thee in the sure confidence that Thou wilt bring us safely through. We would put our trust in Thee, and go on with fresh courage. In Jesus' name. —*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*The Sin of Uselessness.*

It is not by wilful misdeed that we shut ourselves out of the circle of the highest good. It is rather by the failure to rightly employ our opportunities for good. It was the unfruitful tree, the unused talent, the unhelpful life that our Lord found worthy of sharp reproof. To miss the chance to be of service, to speak a word of kindness, to impart something of our strength and good will to those who wait wistfully for them, this is the sin that finds little excuse or atonement. To do evil is bad; to do nothing is almost worse.

✚

Scripture—I was hungry, and ye did not give me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.—*Matt. 25:42, 43.*

✚

Unto the man of yearning thought
And aspiration, to do nought
Is in itself almost an act,—
Being chasm-fire and cataract
Of the soul's utter depths unseal'd.
Yet woe to thee if once thou yield
Unto the act of doing nought!

—DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI ("Soothsay.")

✚

Prayer—Our holy Lord, we confess the weakness and sinfulness of our lives. We have often turned away from Thee to seek our own desires. And often when we have done no evil, we have undertaken nothing of good, and so have been guilty of uselessness and neglect. From this sin of indifference and idleness set us free, O Father. We know that we have no time to waste, for we shall not pass this way again. Lead us into fruitful effort, and deliver us from profitless lives. We ask in the name of the Christ.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*Peace and Good Will.*

It was a marvelous faith which Christianity brought into the world, that out of the brute inheritance of hatred and strife, from nations taught to fight as their inevitable lot, an age of peace should dawn upon the earth. Yet such an amazing expectation has been cherished through the centuries, and still amid the horrors and hatreds of war it glows like a star in the forehead of the dawn. To believe in the coming of such an age, and to labor for its early realization is of the very essence of our faith in Christ.

✚

Scripture—And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased.—*Luke 2:13, 14.*

✚

Love, which is sunlight of peace
Age by age to increase,
Till anger and hatred are dead,
And sorrow and death shall cease:
"Peace on earth and good will";
Souls that are gentle and still
Hear the first music of this
Far off, infinite bliss.

—SIR EDWIN ARNOLD ("Yuletide.")

✚

Prayer—Our gracious God, with keen expectancy of blessing, and humble thankfulness for Thy favor, we approach the great Christmas festival. We do not keep it as those who observe times and seasons. And yet we would discern the meaning of the recurring day set by centuries of faith as at least an appropriate period for thoughts of the nativity. Into the strifes of this troubled world bring Thou an ampler and ever growing measure of good will. We would make the word of peace our own, and seek to promote the coming of an age of brotherhood among all men.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*The Star and the King.*

The world had waited through long generations for the coming of that prophet and prince who should lead his people into peace. What wonder that from the ends of earth expectant sages should make common rendezvous to visit his cradle and pour out their gifts at his feet! If such were our privilege today, would we with as clear eyes discern the truth, and offer him our treasures? And yet no star alone, but twenty centuries of growing daylight have made evident his royalty and power. May we be of those who gather to adore!

✚

Scripture—And they, having heard the king, went their way; and lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.—*Matt. 2:9.*

For he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet.—*1 Cor. 15:25.*

✚

Oh, not alone because His name is Christ,
Oh, not alone because Judea waits
This man-child for her King, the Star stands still.
The universe must utter and fulfill
The mighty voice which states,
The mighty destiny which holds,
Its key-note and its ultimate design.

—HELEN HUNT JACKSON ("A Christmas Symphony.")

✚

Prayer—O God, who hast set Thy stars in the firmament to give light and guidance to men, we have read with fresh interest the story of the star, and the sages who came from the east to the feet of the infant Christ. We would not miss the lesson of their coming, but would bring our own offerings, seeing again his star flaming in the sky. Speed us on our way to the place where the young child abides, and there bid us rest and adore. We pray in his name.—*Amen.*

Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Sacred Fire.*

The life of God within the soul is like a flame upon an altar, which must be perpetually tended lest it waver and expire. Like vestal virgins, the powers that wait upon the soul to save it from default must guard the sacred fire. Every friend of Jesus is a temple in whose shrine there is kindled such a flame. To allow it to expire is to leave the altar desolate, the shrine neglected, the temple forsaken. It is to find oneself at last cold, hungry and alone, afar from God and bereft. The price of holiness and happiness is constant and devoted attendance upon the altar flame.

✚

Scripture—O Timothy, guard that which is committed unto thee.—*1 Tim. 6:20.*

And the lamp of God was not yet gone out.
—*1 Sam. 3:3.*

But when he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish here.—*Luke 15:17.*

✚

But guard the fire within!
Bright, else, and fast the streams of life may roll,
And no man may the other's hurt behold;
Yet each will have one anguish—his own soul
Which perishes of cold.

—MATTHEW ARNOLD ("Progress.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we know that we are careless of the flame that has been kindled upon the altar of our hearts. Too often it burns low, and we are not afraid. But Thou hast shown us the danger of allowing it to expire. Arouse us, we beseech Thee, even by sore pain and trouble, that we may not let the evils of spiritual cold and hunger come upon us. Call us back from the far country, even by suffering, that we may not lose our hope.—*Amen.*

Monday

Theme for the Day—*The Perpetual Christmas.*

Christmas is not merely an event which can be observed and forgotten. It is a spirit which ought to pervade the whole year. Long before Jesus came into the world holy men of old hoped for such a Friend and Savior to come. And ever since he was here an increasing circle of humanity has lived in the warmth and radiance of his life. His coming has changed the face of the world. If it has transformed our own lives, then Christmas is to us a perpetual experience, and every day Christ is born anew within us to larger dominion over mind and heart.

✚

Scripture—That he might be the first-born among many brethren.—*Rom. 8:29.*

My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you.—*Gal. 4:19.*

✚

And Christmas once is Christmas still;
The gates through which He came,
And forests wild and murmuring rill,
And fruitful field and breezy hill,
And all that else the wide world fill
Are vocal with His name.

—PHILLIPS BROOKS ("A Carol.")

✚

Prayer—Holy Father, we adore Thee for the mercy that fails not, and the love that is ever new. We read Thy good will to us in every message of nature and human experience. We prize the good days that come to us in the changing calendar of the year. But there are some that we would keep, letting their benediction abide with us. And among such we put the memorial of our Savior's birth. We hold it fast, and set its deeper meaning in the heart of each new day. Christ has come into the world. We open our lives that he may be born in us anew. We make our prayer in his name.—*Amen.*

Tuesday

Theme for the Day—*Growing Freedom.*

The advancing years teach us to set most value not upon the things we have, but upon what we are becoming. It is well for us if we have food and clothing, shelter and warmth. But even more necessary to character and happiness are truth, loyalty, freedom, faith and love. It would be tragic if we should gain all else and be bankrupt of these. There are certain successes that bring only failure. There are certain sacrifices that are the means of enrichment. To trust God's leadership is to make no mistake, and to find the joy of attainment which is perfect liberty.

✚

Scripture—And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.—*John 8:32.*

He said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or wife, or brethren, or parents, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this time, and in the world to come eternal life.—*Luke 18:29, 30.*

✚

So as from year to year we count our treasure,
Our loss seems less, and larger look our gains;
Time's wrongs repaid in more than even measure—
We lose our jewels, but we break our chains.

—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES ("The Angel-Thief.")

✚

Prayer—Because of our bondage to self and the lesser good, we need Thy help, our God. Thou art still the Opener of doors to them that are bound, and the Bringer of sight to the blind. Our lives are in Thy hand. Dispose aright the experiences of the days for us, we beseech Thee. We will not complain at hardship and loss if they make a way for us to Thyself, and to the liberty wherewith Thou makest Thy people free. Give to the declining year such a ministry for our souls. For we ask in the Master's name. —*Amen.*

Wednesday

Theme for the Day—*The Highest Good.*

There is not one of us who does not wish to get the most out of life. Human experience furnishes abundant examples of people who thought they had chosen aright only to find themselves disappointed and deceived at last. One there was who passed this way and pointed out, both by his teaching and example, a way of life which cannot fail of success. The centuries have said that he was right. To choose Christ and his way of living is to make failure impossible. He is our soul's highest good.

✚

Scripture—Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ.—*Phil. 3:8.*

Thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence is fulness of joy; in thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.—*Psalm 16:11.*

✚

Thenceforth all worlds desire will in thee dye,
And all earthes glorie, on which men do gaze,
Seeme durt and drosse in thy pure-sighted eye,
Compared to that celestial beauties blaze,
Whose glorious beams all fleshly sense doth daze
With admiration of their passing light,
Blinding the eyes, and lumining the spright.

—EDMUND SPENSER ("An Hymne of Heavenly Love.")

✚

Prayer—We have prized too much the things that perish, our heavenly Father. We see the mistakes we have often made in holding fast to that which cannot last. Show us the vision of the true riches. Make us desirous of the highest good. Only with Thee are the treasures that do not vanish, the joys that never cease to satisfy. We would save our souls from defeat and deficit at the last. And so we ask for the mind that was in Christ Jesus, that we may choose aright, and find the highest good.—*Amen.*

Thursday

Theme for the Day—*Greater Things Ahead.*

All life is a growth from childhood to maturity. Every day has something to teach, and every person we meet is able to add something to our store of knowledge. Jesus gave the disciples to understand that he would be their abiding teacher and friend, and that promise he evermore renews to us. All the secrets of the universe are at our disposal. We have an unending volume of truth and beauty open before us, and all eternity in which to make it our own. Nothing less than fulness of knowledge and perfection of character need satisfy us.

✣

Scripture—But we all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory.—*2 Cor. 3:18.*

✣

Sun, star, and space and dark and day
Shall vanish in a vaster glow;
Souls shall climb fast their age-long way,
With all to conquer, all to know.

—F. W. H. MYERS ("To Tennyson.")

✣

Prayer—Our Father, we confess with shame that we have followed too much the desires and devices of our own hearts. We have been content with little knowledge and still less holiness. But Thou hast shown us that there are greater things before us than we have been willing to believe. Life with Thee is to be crowned with larger glory. We shall not be satisfied until we have attained to some measurable likeness to our Lord. We praise Thee for this glorious prospect, and we take fresh courage as we highly resolve to make it our own. In Christ's name.—*Amen.*

Friday

Theme for the Day—*The Coming Age of Good.*

Among all the voices of depression and pessimism which fill the world as men try in vain to fashion by human wisdom and skill a pathway to peace, it is a consolation to listen to the clear and ringing words of our Bible assuring us that God's purposes cannot fail, and that there is a better day ahead. If in the days of the prophets those great spirits had reason to trust the future, and if in the days of Jesus men had reason to believe that his gospel could save the world, how much more have we! For we have seen the passing of darkness and the coming of the true light.

✚

Scripture—And a man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as streams of water in a dry place, as the shade of a great rock in a weary land.—*Isa. 32:2.*

The darkness is passing away, and the true light already shineth.—*1 John 2: 8.*

✚

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

—ALFRED TENNYSON ("In Memoriam.")

✚

Prayer—Our loving Father, from Thy hand have come all the days of the past. To Thee we look for whatever good the future holds. We are not satisfied with the world as we have found it. It is too little the kingdom of God as yet. Grant us the privilege of a part in its regeneration. We wish the joy of fellowship with those sons of God who are bringing in the new day. We are looking for a new earth in which dwells righteousness. It is our prayer that we may be children of light, the kind of people for whose coming and ministry the world is waiting.—*Amen.*

Saturday

Theme for the Day—*The Crowning of the Year.*

A completed year of one's life is like a living soul that looks out upon us with eyes of comfort or reproof. It is a book wherein our own hands have recorded the deeds, the words, the thoughts of another span of life. So to live that these living spirits of the years shall wear a friendly smile, and all these volumes contain a record of increasing good is our purpose by the grace of God. We close this record in thankfulness and hope.

✠

Scripture—An end; the end is come.—*Ezek. 7:2.*

Thou crownest the year with thy goodness.—*Psalm 65:11.*

The end shall be at the time appointed.—*Dan. 11:27.*

✠

So sun and rain have wrought their yearly task,
Have given of their bitter and their sweet;
The earth that yields us freely when we ask
Has left her summer fruitage at our feet.
And now the trees and fields have earned their rest,
And we may read the message that is sent;
When we have done our all, and done our best,
We, too, may fold our arms and be content.

—WILBUR D. NESBIT ("Crowning of the Year.")

✠

Prayer—Very gently hast Thou led us, heavenly Father, through the year now closing. Its days have held for us mingled good and evil. Yet with Thy help we have tried in some measure to turn the evil into good, and to make the good still better. We bring its record to Thee. Put it into the archives of Thy remembrance. For its sins we have only humbling self-blame; for its acts of good we have gratitude; for Thou wert their inspiration. Help us to close the book with resolute purpose to write the story of the coming year with fewer stains. And may all our years bring us nearer to Thee, our eternal Father—the Refuge and Comfort of our souls. We pray in Jesus' name.—*Amen.*

SPECIAL DAYS

New Year's Day

Theme for the Day—*The Opening Year.*

And now at last we stand at the threshold of another year! The door closes behind us and we enter a new room in our Father's house, which we are to furnish with our own hands. All that the old year held of joy and success and instruction we would carry into the new. All that it held of regret and bitterness and folly we would penitently let God bury in the oblivion of His grace. We shall plant in our heart today the sweet flower of forgetfulness, which has its proper place in our garden, even as remembrance and love have their places. Our soul would begin the new year freshened, and cleansed, and righted in its relation to all other souls, and newly inspired to undertake its own task with purpose and hope.

✚

Scripture—Forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth to those which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.—*Phil. 3:13-14.*

✚

Every one for his own.
The night is starry and cold,
And the New Year, blithe and bold,
Comes up to take his own.

—ALFRED TENNYSON ("The Death of the Old Year.")

✚

Prayer—God of our fathers, we look to Thee in gratitude for the blessings of another year. Our times are in Thy hand. We commit ourselves fearlessly to Thy guidance. Let no failure or success of the past hinder our progress toward the goal where stands the Author and Finisher of our faith. Bestow Thy Holy Spirit upon us in fuller measure, that we, being kept from sin, may fulfill our vocation in the world, and so live that to die shall be gain.—*Amen.*

Lincoln's Birthday

Theme for the Day—*The Beloved Leader.*

No life in the sweep of our national history more admirably represents the immense opportunities of democratic institutions than that of Lincoln. A child of the people, he rose by sheer industry and integrity to the highest place in the state, and to an enduring supremacy among the heroes of our national life. May we not say of him as truly as of that earlier Abraham, that God called him for a mighty purpose, and made of him a leader of his people and a blessing to all the world.

✚

Scripture—The Lord raised up a deliverer.—*Jud. 3:9.*

I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and be thou a blessing.—*Gen. 12:2.*

I will make thee a great name, like unto the name of the great ones that are in the earth.—*2 Sam. 7:9.*

✚

God took a piece of common human clay;
Planted therein ambition's vital seed;
Placed him, a youth, beside the common way,
That he might learn the common human need.

Made strong by strife, he faced the storm of wrath;
Love made him wise, a Nation's cause to plead;
He walked with God, though in a yeoman's path,
And seized on fame by an immortal deed.

—THOMAS CURTIS CLARK ("The Masterpiece.")

✚

Prayer—Our divine Father, we praise Thee for the providence that has guided us in the great crises of our history. When dangers have threatened the ideals we have cherished, then Thou hast raised up to us those by whose wisdom and steadiness of purpose we have been led out to safety and peace. For such great spirits we thank Thee. And we pray that in accordance with the principles they have taught us, through the blessing of Thy gracious Spirit, we may be guided all our days.—*Amen.*

Washington's Birthday

Theme for the Day—*The Nation's Heritage.*

The ideals of the American people are summed up in two names—Washington and Lincoln. The character of these men, in whom were mingled the qualities of great leadership—dignity, wisdom, sympathy, courage, and reverence—is the symbol of the nation's life; for a people is known by the men it reveres. The day that commemorates a great life ought not to be passed without observance. Our land will be safe, happy and honored as it keeps before it the ideals and counsels of Washington.

✣

Scripture—He hath remembered his covenant forever, saying, Unto thee will I give the land, the lot of your inheritance, when they were but few men in number, yea, very few, and sojourners in it.—*Psalm 105:8, 11, 12.*

✣

No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand, which conducts the affairs of men, more than the people of the United States. Every step, by which they have advanced to the character of an independent Nation, seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency.

—GEORGE WASHINGTON ("First Inaugural Address.")

✣

Prayer—God of our fathers, Thou hast brought our nation safely through the perils of war and of peace, and given us an honored place among the peoples of the earth. We thank Thee for the noble men to whom we owe the wise and careful founding of the state. May we cherish the rich legacy of their unselfish patriotism, and seek to hand on the inheritance undiminished to our children. Bless our country, its rulers and its people. And may our patriotism, manifest itself in labors for the true prosperity of our national life.—*Amen.*

Palm Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Triumphal Entry.*

Once for a brief hour Jesus permitted the multitudes, who were eagerly waiting for a king, to hail him as such and conduct him royally into the holy city. To that honor the people welcomed him, and the little children in the temple poured out their praises. We, too, would greet him, not with trophies of palm branch and olive, but with the loyalty of his true and constant followers, rejoicing in his triumph as the King comes to his own.

✚

Scripture—On the morrow a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took the branches of the palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried out, Hosanna: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel.—*John 12:12, 13.*

✚

> All glory, laud, and honor to Thee, Redeemer, King!
> To whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring.
> Thou art the King of Israel, thou David's royal Son,
> Who in the Lord's name comest, the King & blessed One.
>
> —THEODOLPH OF ORLEANS ("Palm Sunday.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, we open with joy the gates of our souls to let the King come in. Not for a passing hour of triumph would we receive him, to send him hence away with broken heart and frustrate purpose; but we welcome him to abide forever as Lord and King. Prepare us for his coming. May our hearts be cleansed of sin and our purposes purified from evil. Search us as with candles. Create in us clean hearts, and renew right spirits within us. Then with gladness and the voice of praise we shall greet him, whose right it is to reign.—*Amen.*

Easter Sunday

Theme for the Day—*The Resurrection of Christ.*

There is a question which the human heart asks insistently; If a man die, shall he live again? There are many voices that answer with hope, but one alone brings conviction. Jesus brought to his disciples the proof that death had no dominion over him. His was a quality of life upon which its dismay could not fall. In fellowship with him we, too, are victors over this enemy. The resurrection of Jesus, though we may not comprehend its mystery, is the pledge that those who partake of his spirit have passed from death to life.

✚

Scripture—And the angel answered and said unto the woman, Fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus whom they crucified. He is not here, for he is risen from the dead.—*Matt. 28:5, 6.*

✚

> The day of Resurrection; Earth, tell it out abroad,
> The Passover of Gladness, the Passover of God.
> From death to life eternal, from this world to the sky,
> Our Christ hath brought us over, with hymns of victory.
>
> —JOHN OF DAMASCUS ("Resurrection.")

✚

Prayer—Father of life, Thou Giver of every good, we rejoice in the holy memories of this day. Thou hast shown us the empty tomb, and our hearts are glad with the knowledge that in Christ death has no dominion over us. Bestow upon us the joy of those whose lives are hid with Christ in God. Help us to live in the glory and strength of that eternal life, which already we begin to possess, and whose secret is that we may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent. Lighten all our days with the clear shining of Thy presence, and may we find the evening time bright with the radiance of the endless day.—*Amen.*

Memorial Day

Theme for the Day—*Remembrance of the Heroic Dead.*

History has many proofs that without the shedding of blood there is no redemption. Liberty and progress exact their price, and too often that price must be paid in the blood of heroes and the tears of a nation. But it is a consolation to remember that our history has been worth all and far more than it has cost, and that those who have perished to make it glorious have found their own highest reward—the affectionate remembrance of those who come after them, and the enduring monument of civic virtue and national worth.

✣

Scripture—To bring to remembrance.—*Psalm 38:1.*

My soul hath them still in remembrance.—*Lam. 3:20.*

Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations; ask thy father and he will show thee; thine elders, and they will tell thee.—*Deut. 32:7.*

✣

By the flow of the inland river
Whence the fleets of iron have fled,
Where the blades of the grave-grass quiver,
Asleep are the ranks of the dead;
Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the judgment day;
Under the one, the Blue,
Under the other, the Gray.

—FRANCIS M. FINCH ("The Blue and the Gray.")

✣

Prayer—Gracious Father, Thou hast given us this land of our love and pride. Through many dangers hast Thou brought us, and many graves have claimed their own in the saving of Thy gifts of freedom and good will. We honor today those who gave their lives for our country and for the extension of democracy the world over. May we never forget the price they paid. And may we today consecrate ourselves afresh to the service of the land they loved and died to save.—*Amen.*

Flag Day

Theme for the Day—*The Colors.*

The flag of our nation is only a bit of colored bunting, but it has all the meaning of national achievements and patriotic hopes. Every generation adds to its significance. Every new summit gained gives added glory to its folds. We thought we loved our flag because of its record through war and peace on our own soil. But its part in the great world struggle has made it more precious, the symbol of heroism, democracy, and uncalculating consecration to the noblest ideals of humanity and Christian civilization.

✚

Scripture—Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth. —*Psalm 60:4.*

We will triumph in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners.—*Psalm 20:5.*

✚

Flag of the free heart's hope and home!
By angel hands to valor given;
Thy stars have lit the welkin dome,
And all thy hues were born in heaven.
Forever float that standard sheet!
Where breathes the foe but falls before us,
With freedom's soil beneath our feet,
And freedom's banner streaming o'er us?

—JOSEPH RODMAN DRAKE ("The American Flag")

✚

Prayer—God of our fathers, we adore Thee for Thy providential guidance of our nation through all the exigencies of its history. We thank Thee for our flag, that in so many scenes of war and peace has stood for liberty, courage, patriotism and the love of our land. May that banner grow dearer to us through the years. May the colors call us constantly to patriotic service and sacrifice. And may the love of the flag lead us to sincerer reverence for that older and more enduring standard, the Banner of the Cross. —*Amen.*

Independence Day

Theme for the Day—*National Blessings and Duties.*

More than a century ago "our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." In war and peace through the years since that time this nation has heeded steadily the purpose which gave it birth. The noble names of the founders are an imperishable heritage. Its ideals are the inspiration of all its citizens, young or old, native or foreign born. In the spirit of the great Declaration it is our task to reconsecrate ourselves with unfailing loyalty to its purposes and its destiny.

✚

Scripture—The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.—*Psalm 16:6.*

Blessed is the people whose God is Jehovah.
—*Psalm 144:15.*

✚

God of our fathers, known of old,
Lord of our far-flung battle line;
Beneath whose mighty hand we hold
Dominion over palm and pine;
Lord God of hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget! Lest we forget!

—RUDYARD KIPLING ("The Recessional.")

✚

Prayer—Our God and Ruler, we adore Thee for Thy guidance of our national life up to this very hour. Through dangers of many kinds Thou hast brought us, and though we have often suffered, yet Thou hast never forsaken us. On this day, the memorial of our beginnings as a nation, we would not be unmindful of that kindly Hand by which we have been led and safeguarded. May we celebrate this day, not as those who would obscure its meaning by confusion and clamor, but as those who would make of it a real holiday, a day of holy memories and hopes. And may our purposes be lifted to new levels of patriotism.—*Amen.*

Labor Day

Theme for the Day—*The Brotherhood of Work.*

As the centuries have passed and the broader spirit of democracy has prevailed, the world has come to recognize labor as a blessing rather than a curse. Less and less is it true that work is the hard lot of the many and idleness the favored portion of the few. Today the vast army of labor includes all who serve humanity either by hand or brain. Our Lord was a laborer, taking his part in the daily tasks of his town. In his spirit the increasing dignity and value of labor are ever more truly interpreted.

✚

Scripture—Man goeth forth unto his work, and to his labor until the evening.—*Psalm 104:23.*

Every man also, to whom God hath given...power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, to rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God.—*Eccl. 5:19.*

✚

And his spirit leaps within him to be gone before him then,
Underneath the light he looks at, in among the throngs of men:
Men, my brothers, men the workers, ever reaping something new;
That which they have done but earnest of the things that they shall do.
—ALFRED TENNYSON ("Locksley Hall.")

✚

Prayer—Our Father, our Master has taught us that Thou art the great and eternal Worker, who hast through the ages wrought at the fabric of the worlds and the upward progress of man. We praise Thee for this divine comradeship which we have with Thee in good and profitable work. We are all of us bound together in a common labor and a common necessity. We pray Thy blessing on all who work for their daily bread. May the souls of men, whatever their tasks, be brought into closer sympathy with each other, so that strifes shall cease, and the workers shall be glad in the labor, and receive a just reward for their endeavors. In Jesus' name.—*Amen.*

Thanksgiving

Theme for the Day—*The Nation's Cause for Gratitude.* The custom of observing annually a day of prayer and thanksgiving we owe to the Puritan founders of the nation. Through all the years we have observed it with unfailing remembrance of the divine Source of our blessings, the almighty Ruler of our destinies. With gratitude we offer today our Thanksgiving, and invoke the continuance of the heavenly benediction upon our native land, our institutions, our homes, and all our lives.

✠

Scripture—Ye shall divide the land for inheritance, and ye shall inherit it, one as well as another; for I sware to give it unto your fathers; and this land shall fall unto you for inheritance.—*Ezek. 47:13, 14.*

✠

O beautiful for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties
Above the fruited plain!
America! America!
God shed His grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea!

—KATHERINE LEE BATES ("A New America.")

✠

Prayer—O Lord, we thank Thee that after the custom of our fathers we may observe this day of thankfulness. Thou hast been very good to us. The blessings of the year have been abundant. From scourge and pestilence, from storm and flood, from invasion and defeat, Thou hast protected us. With abundant harvests, growing cities, and increasing resources Thou hast enriched us. We would recognize Thy hand in all our national experiences. Save us from boastfulness and pride. And may our nation bear to the other peoples of the earth a living testimony to our love of justice, righteousness and peace throughout the world. We ask for Thy name's sake.—*Amen.*

Christmas

Theme for the Day—*The Birth of the Christ.*

Midway the course of history there stands a golden mile-stone—the nativity. From it in either direction the years take their way. It is the perennial reminder of the presence of God in our human experience. The incarnation is at once the expression of the human life of God and the divine nature of man. It is no mere episode of the past, but a perpetually renewed experience of the present and the future. The Christmas time is the sacrament of divine love and human hopes. It is the benediction of the closing year.

✣

Scripture—The angel said unto them, Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people; for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. —*Luke 2:10, 11.*

✣

At thy nativity a glorious choir
Of angels, in the fields of Bethlehem, sung
To shepherds, watching at their folds by night,
And told them the Messiah now was born,
Where they might see him.

—JOHN MILTON ("Paradise Regained.")

✣

Prayer—O Lord our Lord, how wonderful is Thy love to us. In a thousand forms Thou hast revealed it, but in none so fully as in the gracious bestowment of the life of Jesus. He has opened up to us the vision of God and the way to eternal life. Into this sordid and restless world he has brought the holy inspiration of goodness and of friendship with Thee. We welcome the Christmas day, not for its gifts and its social joy alone, but for its deeper lesson of a united humanity and a coming reign of peace. Help us to hear above the strife and confusion of the world the angel song of peace and good will.—*Amen.*

Grace at Table

WE thank Thee, good Father, for all Thy blessings, and for this food which is Thy gift also. Make us worthy of Thy goodness. In the name of Jesus.—*Amen.*

✚

OUR Father, Thou openest Thy hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing. We thank Thee for our daily food. Bless us in our work and our rest, and grant us the constant comfort of Thy presence. We ask in Jesus' name. —*Amen.*

✚

FATHER, we thank Thee for the night,
And for the pleasant morning light.
For rest and food and loving care,
And all that makes this world so fair.
Help us to do the things we should,
To be to others kind and good;
In all we do, in work or play,
To grow more loving every day.—*Amen.*

✚

HEAVENLY Father, hear our prayer,
Keep us in Thy loving care.
Guard us through the livelong day,
In our work and in our play.
Keep us pure and sweet and true,
In everything we say and do.—*Amen.*

✚

FOR this new morning and its light,
For rest and shelter of the night,
For health and food, for love and friends,
For every gift His goodness sends
We thank Thee, gracious Lord.—*Amen.*

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